

# Saints for All Christendom

## *Naturalizing the Alexandrian Saints Cyrus and John in Seventh- to Thirteenth-Century Rome*

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“With the downfall of the Gothic kingdom, the Italy and Rome of antiquity begins to disintegrate.”<sup>1</sup> Thus Gregorovius opens the third book of his *History of Rome in the Middle Ages* (first published 1859–1872), “From the Beginning of the Rule of the Exarchs to the Beginning of the Eighth Century.” According to Gregorovius, this was a period of cultural stagnation, as the city was neglected by its overlords, the emperors in Constantinople. He writes, “The ancient capital of the Roman Empire was already entirely abandoned. The Greek emperors, occupied by the migrations of the Slav tribes on the banks of the Danube and by the Persians in the East, and weakened by revolutions at home, left Italy to her fate.”<sup>2</sup> With these words Gregorovius raises the question of Rome’s exceptionalism. Was this a city that, already from the late sixth century onward, was disconnected from the Mediterranean, was left to its own resources, and so

developed its own independent identity? This question is pivotal both for understanding the trajectory of the late antique and medieval Mediterranean and for writing the history of Rome more generally. How far back in time can we trace today the sense of distance that separates Rome from Alexandria? Was Rome ever “a firm standpoint and lofty watchtower,” as Gregorovius would have it, “whence [the historian] can survey the movements of the medieval world”?<sup>3</sup>

Many scholars have challenged Gregorovius’s characterization of Rome in the period 554 to 751, between Justinian’s promulgation of the Pragmatic Sanction, which marked the official resumption of imperial authority in Rome after the Gothic Wars, and the fall of the exarchate of Ravenna, which marked an end to “Byzantine” rule in northern Italy. Yet whether the history of late-sixth- to mid-eighth-century Rome is part of Byzantine history and how “Byzantine” rule in Italy after Justinian differed from earlier centuries of “Roman” rule in Italy remains the subject of debate.

For example, in a recent study focusing on the late-seventh- and early-eighth-century “eastern” or “Greek” popes (a series of popes described by their biographers as Sicilian, Greek [*Graecus*], or Syrian “by nationality [*natione*]”), Thomas Noble concludes, “In the end, therefore, I do not think it is right to speak of a Byzantine period in Italian history. . . . In my

1 “Mit dem Untergange des gotischen Reichs beginnt der Zerfall der antiken Gestalt Italiens und Roms,” in F. Gregorovius, *Geschichte der Stadt Rom im Mittelalter: Vom V. bis zum XVI. Jh.*, bk. 3.1.1, ed. W. Kampf, 4 vols. (1953–57; repr. Munich, 1978), based primarily on Gregorovius’s fourth and last revision (Stuttgart, 1886–96), 1:239; translation based on A. Hamilton, *History of the City of Rome in the Middle Ages by Ferdinand Gregorovius*, 8 vols. (London, 1894–1902), 2:1. In the first edition (1859) Gregorovius was even more pointed: “Aber mit dem Ende des gotischen Reichs beginnt auch der eigentliche Verfall und Ruin von Rom.”

2 Gregorovius, *Geschichte*, bk. 3.1.2, ed. Kampf, 1:249; trans. based on Hamilton, *History* 2:23.

3 Gregorovius, *Geschichte*, bk. 1.1.1, ed. Kampf, 1:1; trans. based on Hamilton, *History* 1:2.

view, a regime that cannot achieve allegiance even by coercion or persuasion cannot be said to rule.”<sup>4</sup> His argument is twofold. He first demonstrates that the number of incidents on record in which “Byzantines” may be said to have exercised “effective power or authority in Italy” is minimal.<sup>5</sup> He then convincingly shows that the Greek popes were neither “sympathetic to Byzantium,” nor regarded by contemporaries as so ethnically (or culturally) “Greek” as to fail to be Roman.<sup>6</sup> These findings dovetail with recent work by Clemens Gantner, who has shown that in Roman papal sources the term “Greek” emerged as a pejorative label distinct from “Roman” only in the mid- to late eighth century.<sup>7</sup> Prior to then, being a “Roman Greek” posed no contradiction (although it was also possible to be a non-Roman “Greek”).

Meanwhile, archeologists, especially Robert Coates-Stephens, have demonstrated that in this “dark age” there was on the ground significant building activity, including much that may be attributed to the “Byzantine” presence—much more than Richard Krautheimer’s authoritative assessment of the period had previously concluded.<sup>8</sup> Given the paucity of

literary sources that bespeak “Byzantine” construction, Coates-Stephens has cleverly turned to omissions, arguing that the absence from the *Liber Pontificalis* (a source usually so eager to maximize papal activity) of a foundation notice for a church is an indication that a non-papal donor (such as a member of the Byzantine administration or other elite) might have been responsible for establishing the church. He concludes that the “conceptual importance of Rome in the Byzantine mind” was in fact reflected in the city, particularly on the *forum Romanum*.<sup>9</sup>

This article contributes to an understanding of what, if anything, was “Byzantine” about seventh-/eighth-century Rome and what changed thereafter.<sup>10</sup> At stake here is disentangling our perception of early medieval Rome from the later medieval (and modern) anachronistic historiography of Rome as the seat of a powerful papacy, culturally and dogmatically separated from the eastern Mediterranean. Unlike Noble or Coates-Stephens, I do not seek to do such disentangling through the lens of the papal or “Byzantine” administration. Rather, I examine a particular pair of “Greek” saints, Cyrus and John, whose repackaging in Rome, by Greek- and Latin-speaking elites, may be observed in texts and frescoes from the seventh–thirteenth centuries.<sup>11</sup> Like Coates-Stephens, I argue that there was more “Byzantine” influence in seventh-/eighth-century Rome than is immediately apparent; like Noble, I argue that this was not “Byzantine,” “Greek,” or “eastern” in the sense of being foreign to Rome. My contention is that seventh-/eighth-century Rome was unique, but not exceptional: the city had its own particular history and its own distinctive physical fabric, but it remained a resolutely Mediterranean city. Its urban identity was flexible enough to include individuals, saints, and cultural practices from the Eastern Mediterranean. The later vicissitudes of Cyrus and John’s cult through the 13th century, however, point to a shift from a mobile, bilingual Mediterranean elite

4 T. F. X. Noble, “Greek Popes: Yes or No, and Did It Matter?” in *Western Perspectives on the Mediterranean: Cultural Transfer in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages, 400–800 AD*, ed. A. Fischer and I. Wood (London, 2014), 77–86, 143–46, here 86.

5 Ibid., 80.

6 Ibid., 82.

7 C. Gantner, *Freunde Roms und Völker der Finsternis: Die päpstliche Konstruktion von Anderen im 8. und 9. Jahrhundert* (Vienna, 2014), 60–138, esp. 91–100; idem, “The Label ‘Greeks’ in the Papal Diplomatic Repertoire in the Eighth Century,” in *Strategies of Identification: Ethnicity and Religion in Early Medieval Europe*, eds. W. Pohl and G. Heydemann, Cultural Encounters in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages 13 (Turnhout, 2013), 303–49.

8 R. Coates-Stephens, “Dark Age Architecture in Rome,” *BSR* 65 (1997): 177–232; idem, “Byzantine Building Patronage in Post-reconquest Rome,” in *Les cités de l’Italie tardo-antique, IV<sup>e</sup>–VI<sup>e</sup> siècle: Institutions, économie, société, culture et religion*, ed. C. Goddard, M. Ghilardi, and P. Porena (Rome, 2006), 149–66; idem, “The Forum Romanum in the Byzantine Period,” in *Marmoribus vestita: Miscellanea in onore di Federico Guiobaldi*, ed. O. Brandt and P. Pergola, *Studi di antichità cristiana* 63 (Vatican City, 2011), 385–408. See also the work of Caroline Goodson, including “Roman Archaeology in Medieval Rome,” in *Rome: Continuing Encounters between Past and Present*, ed. D. Caldwell and L. Caldwell (Farnham, 2011), 17–34. For Krautheimer’s assessment see above all his *Corpus Basilicarum Christianarum Romae: The Early Christian Basilicas of Rome (IV–IX Cent.)*, 5 vols. (Vatican City, 1937–1977), and the general overview in his *Rome, Profile of a City, 312–1308* (Princeton, 1980).

9 Coates-Stephens, “Forum Romanum,” 386.

10 This debate has also been lively with respect to the art-historical evidence and the Roman liturgy; for discussion of the latter, see most recently J. F. Romano, *Liturgy and Society in Early Medieval Rome* (Farnham, 2014); most discussion of early medieval Roman art has focused on S. Maria Antiqua, see esp. n. 73.

11 Much of the evidence was first collected by P. Sinthern, “Der römische Abbacyrus in Geschichte, Legende und Kunst,” *RQ* 22 (1908): 196–239.

to a resolutely Latin elite that viewed its “Byzantine,” “Greek” cultural heritage as foreign and in need of naturalization. What we see taking shape is the idea of Rome as a “watchtower,” a city isolated from the movements of the world around it. This image, even for early medieval Rome, remained difficult to dislodge.

The late antique cult of Sts. Cyrus and John was based at the sanctuary of Menouthis outside Alexandria. There, the saints acquired a web of therapeutic, universalizing, anti-pagan, and orthodox connotations, which, through the hagiographic dossier of Sophronius (d. ca. 638), would form the basis of their cult in Rome. The first section of this paper provides an overview of Sophronius’s profile of the saints, focusing on his presentation of Cyrus and John as saints for *all* of Christendom. This profile, I show, is a Mediterranean perspective that includes, as especially venerable, the city of Rome.

The second section describes how inhabitants of Rome participated in, but also modified, the cult of Cyrus and John from the late seventh century onward. Excerpts from Sophronius’s hagiographic dossier were translated from Greek into Latin—a translation project that testifies to a Roman elite comfortable with Cyrus and John’s Sophronian profile, but also desirous of greater Roman ecclesiastical oversight of the saints’ cult. Similarly, frescos that were added to the church of S. Maria Antiqua on the *forum Romanum* indicate an elite in Rome who took part in Cyrus and John’s healing cult as it had developed at Menouthis, but with a Roman twist, namely, a preference for Cyrus over John. Moreover, there is evidence to suggest that, as in Menouthis, relics played a role in the saints’ Roman cult. The third and final section examines two projects that aimed to make the cult of Cyrus and John more intelligible and palatable to Latin audiences in a city increasingly disconnected from the Mediterranean world. The projects are Anastasius Bibliothecarius’s late-ninth-century compilation and translation of hagiographic texts related to the saints, including a much simplified *passio*, and, most dramatically, an anonymous imaginative *translatio* (which developed prior to the thirteenth century) that claimed the saints for Rome.



## 1. Sophronius and the Cult of Cyrus and John at Menouthis

In the early seventh century, Sophronius, who eventually became patriarch of Jerusalem (from 634 to his death in ca. 638), produced an extensive hagiographic dossier (a preface, encomium, and miracle collection) that furnished Cyrus and John with a web of therapeutic, theological, and ideological significations which would accompany the saints throughout the subsequent centuries as they established themselves in Rome.<sup>12</sup> Significant, from the perspective of their later Roman reception, was the degree to which Sophronius’s profile of Cyrus and John presented the saints as relevant for Rome.

### *Alexandrian Healing Saints*

The cult of Cyrus and John—a monk and an ex-soldier martyred under Diocletian—was based at a sanctuary in Menouthis, outside of Alexandria, a thriving Mediterranean port city, and an intellectual and theological powerhouse throughout late antiquity.<sup>13</sup> Alexandria, as a wealthy administrative center with a forceful tradition of monasticism, was among the Byzantine Empire’s foremost, but also, especially from a Constantinopolitan perspective, problematic, ecclesiastical sees. At the turn of the seventh century this was a city—and a religious topography—contested between those who endorsed the Council of Chalcedon in 451, and the non-Chalcedonian Miaphysite (pejoratively termed “Monophysite”) majority, both of whom regarded themselves as the true heirs of Cyril, patriarch

12 For an introduction to the dossier see J. Gascou, “Des origines du culte des saints Cyr et Jean,” *AB* 125, no. 2 (2007): 241–81. The Greek texts survive in a tenth-century manuscript, Vat. gr. 1607. The preface and encomium (*BHG* 475–476) have been edited and translated into French: P. Bringel, *Sophrone de Jérusalem: Panégyrique des saints Cyr et Jean*, PO 51 (Turnhout, 2008). The Greek text of the miracles (*BHG* 477–479) was most recently edited by N. Fernández Marcos, *Los Thaumata de Sofronio: Contribución al estudio de la incubatio cristiana* (Madrid, 1975). Further corrections are given by J. M. Duffy, “Observations on Sophronius’ Miracles of Cyrus and John,” *JTS*, n.s. 35 (1984): 71–90 at 77–90. For a French translation see J. Gascou, *Sophrone de Jérusalem Miracles des saints Cyr et Jean: BHG I 477–479*, Études d’archéologie et d’histoire ancienne (Paris, 2006). These editions supersede A. Mai’s Greek edition (but do not include an edition of the Latin version).

13 C. Haas, *Alexandria in Late Antiquity: Topography and Social Conflict* (Baltimore, 1996).

of Alexandria (d. 444). These rival claims, which stemmed from differences between Cyril's earlier and later formulations of Christ's nature, proved stubbornly intractable.<sup>14</sup>

Sophronius's presentation of the cult of Cyrus and John was shaped by Alexandria's distinctive Christian history. According to the tradition endorsed by Sophronius it was Cyril of Alexandria who had first established the sanctuary of Cyrus and John in the early fifth century to provide, physically and spiritually, for his congregation.<sup>15</sup> Surviving archaeological and textual evidence from the shrine itself is limited, and even the texts attributed to Cyril are preserved only in the Sophronian dossier, so that it is difficult to corroborate Sophronius's portrait of the saints' cult.<sup>16</sup> However, as the Sophronian dossier would serve as the basis for the saints' textual reception in Rome, we can confidently read his hagiographic dossier as reflecting the pedigree with which Cyrus and John came to Rome.

Sophronius was a teacher of rhetoric in Damascus who became a monk after visiting Egypt. In the last years of his life he became patriarch of Jerusalem and negotiated the surrender of Jerusalem to the Arabs in 638 shortly before his death.<sup>17</sup> Before he settled in Jerusalem, Sophronius had traveled widely, visiting monastic centers and Christian holy sites in Egypt, Palestine, and Rome. As he records in the preface to his miracle collection, Sophronius, attracted by the saints' healing reputation, visited the sanctuary of Cyrus and John on account of his eye problems. Once there, he was so impressed by the saints' many miracles that he sought out further information about their cult but could find nothing except three short sermons by

Cyril of Alexandria.<sup>18</sup> Incensed that pagans should have composed books in honor of their demons while such athletes for God went unrecognized, Sophronius vowed to fill the textual gap by commemorating the saints. The result, written ca. 610–20, was a weighty text that included a description of the saints' martyrdom, Cyril's translation of their relics to Menouthis, and seventy of the saints' miracles.

The stated aim and emphasis of these texts is to render due praise to the saints. Sophronius presents his project as following in the footsteps of Cyril of Alexandria, who, according to Sophronius, had promoted Cyrus and John as a means of eradicating a popular healing shrine in Menouthis dedicated to Isis. As Cyril had sought to suppress pagan practices, so too Sophronius presents his Christian dossier as countering the pagan textual heritage. Christian praise of the saints is to replace pagan praise of demons.

Additionally, however, Sophronius's portrayal of Cyrus and John registered his own (evolving and gradually hardening) theological position in the ongoing Christological controversy, namely, a claim to adhere strictly to the Council of Chalcedon, which taught that Christ had two coexisting natures, divine and human.<sup>19</sup> (This would eventually culminate in Sophronius's insistence on rejecting Monotheletism and Monoenergism as deviations from the tenets of Chalcedon.) Theological explication rarely takes center stage in his texts regarding Cyrus and John, yet nonetheless his hagiographic dossier firmly situates them in the Chalcedonian camp.<sup>20</sup>

14 In a letter to John of Antioch in 433, Cyril accepted the formula that Christ was "of two natures," but later he preferred to say that Christ was "out of two natures"; P. T. R. Gray, "The Legacy of Chalcedon," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian*, ed. M. Maas (Cambridge, 2005), 215–38 at 219.

15 Regarding Sophronius and the cult of Cyrus and John, see especially P. Booth, *Crisis of Empire: Doctrine and Dissent at the End of Late Antiquity*, Transformation of the Classical Heritage 52 (Berkeley, 2013), 44–89.

16 See D. Montserrat, "Pilgrimage to the Shrine of SS Cyrus and John at Menouthis in Late Antiquity," in *Pilgrimage and Holy Space in Late Antique Egypt*, ed. D. Frankfurter (Leiden, 1998), 257–80.

17 Regarding Sophronius see C. von Schönborn, *Sophrone de Jérusalem: Vie monastique et confession dogmatique* (Paris, 1972).

18 Sophronius, *Preface*, 1, ed. Bringel (n. 12 above), 16–19. Three short sermons (*BHG* 472–474), attributed to Cyril, survive, included in the Greek corpus of Sophronius's works: A. Mai, ed., *Spicilegium romanum*, 10 vols. (Rome, 1839–1844), 4:248–52 (PG 77:1100–1105). For discussion of these works see Gasco, "Des origines" (n. 12 above), 251–57.

19 See in particular Booth, *Crisis of Empire*, 44–89; and idem, "Saints and Soteriology in Sophronius Sophista's *Miracles of Cyrus and John*," in *The Church, the Afterlife and the Fate of the Soul*, ed. P. Clarke and T. Claydon, *Studies in Church History* 45 (Woodbridge, Suffolk, 2009), 52–63. See also P. Maraval, "Fonction pédagogique de la littérature hagiographique d'un lieu de pèlerinage: L'exemple des Miracles de Cyr et Jean," in *Hagiographie, cultures et sociétés, IV<sup>e</sup>–XII<sup>e</sup> siècles: Actes du Colloque organisé à Nanterre et à Paris (2–5 mai 1979)* (Paris, 1981), 383–97.

20 An exception is miracle no. 39, which stresses how the saints cure only those who follow Chalcedonian Christology.



Sophronius's encomium celebrates Cyrus and John in Chalcedonian-Christological terms as an unlikely "pair [ξυνωρίδος]" whose union in life and death indicates the remarkable power of God to combine opposites.<sup>21</sup> Cyrus had been a monk, whereas John had been a soldier. These, as Sophronius describes in depth, are antithetical lifestyles. A monk is a peace-loving desert-dweller who dedicates himself to the poor and extends his hands for supplication, whereas a soldier is a belligerent city-dweller who bears arms and steals goods that are not his own in the service of a tyrant.<sup>22</sup> In short, as with Christ himself, so too with the pairing of Cyrus and John, God's power had united the terrestrial and celestial.

Sophronius lavishes effusive praise on the saints but provides little concrete information about their lives.<sup>23</sup> He describes how in the reign of the emperor Diocletian, Syrianus, the governor of Alexandria, seized a group of three young virgins and their mother in Canope (by Alexandria). Hearing of their fate, Cyrus and John went to encourage and support the women.<sup>24</sup> The women and Cyrus and John underwent a lengthy trial and numerous tortures before they were martyred. Local Christians then hid the martyrs in the church of St. Mark, men and women separately.<sup>25</sup>

The saints remained there until an angel exhorted the bishop Cyril to translate Cyrus to Menouthis. However, when Cyril opened the tomb, he found both saints, their bodies indistinguishable, and decided to translate both, "reckoning wisely that the divine command had made known both by the name of one, on account of the unanimity and concord of both, and that it was not right to divide after death those whom neither their way of life, nor place, nor burial, nor time, nor suffering divided."<sup>26</sup> Through their life and death together, the saints had become indivisible.

Once brought to Menouthis, the saints immediately began to exercise their healing powers. The saints chased out the demons and undertook a "spoliation [σκύλευσις]" of their "possessions [τῶν ὑπαρχόντων]," that is, the men and women who had supplicated the demons.<sup>27</sup> The saints began to cure physically and spiritually the crowds who had once prayed to Isis, thus eradicating pagan belief. Thereupon the pagan temple was destroyed and replaced by a church for the saints. Since then, Sophronius asserts, the saints have continued to perform miracles, curing those suffering from different ailments: the lame, the blind, those possessed by demons, but "most of all those suffering from mortification of the soul."<sup>28</sup> As Sophronius takes care to demonstrate in his miracle collection, patients were required to purify themselves (of misguided beliefs or moral failings) in order to have their bodily ailments cured.<sup>29</sup> Thus, as Booth has argued, the saints offer a model of saintly intercession, salvation as achievable through "the adoption of ascetic virtue," a model that reflects the monastic ideals Sophronius embraced.<sup>30</sup>

To summarize, Sophronius's hagiographic dossier presents a multifaceted portrait of Cyrus and John. They are physician-saints for body and soul but also serve as guides for personal moral improvement. The saints willingly dispense cures for physical ailments, free of charge, to men and women, whatever their origins or social status, provided that their patients first cleanse themselves of any spiritual ills. At the same time the saints, in their life and death, act as witnesses to Chalcedonian orthodoxy. They are a pair of opposites who prove God's ability to achieve the impossible.

### *John, a Pilgrim from Rome to Menouthis*

Sophronius situates Sts. Cyrus and John firmly at their shrine in Menouthis. Yet his miracle collection is eager to demonstrate their universal Christian significance. To do so the collection includes seventy miracles, all of

21 Sophronius, *Encomium*, 10, ed. Bringel, 30–32.

22 Sophronius, *Encomium*, 11–14, ed. Bringel, 32–37.

23 As I discuss below (with reference to Anastasius Bibliothecarius's translation project), a later Greek *passio* attributed to Sophronius (but certainly of later date) describes Cyrus and John as practicing physicians already during their life. Sophronius's account provides no indication that he was familiar with this tradition.

24 Sophronius, *Encomium*, 18–19, ed. Bringel, 42–45.

25 Sophronius, *Encomium*, 23, ed. Bringel, 52–55.

26 Sophronius, *Encomium*, 27, ed. Bringel, 60: "καὶ σοφῶς λογισάμενος ὡς ἀμφοτέρους τὸ θεόλεκτον πρόσταγμα τῇ τοῦ ἐνὸς προσηγορίᾳ, διὰ τὴν ἀμφοτέρων ὁμόνοιαν τε καὶ ὁμοφροσύνην

ἐμήνυσεν, καὶ ὡς οὐ δέον διελεῖν μετὰ θάνατον οὓς οὐ τρόπος, οὐ τόπος, οὐ τάφος, οὐ χρόνος, οὐ πάθος διέλυσε."

27 Sophronius, *Encomium*, 29, ed. Bringel, 62–5.

28 Sophronius, *Encomium*, 30, ed. Bringel, 66, line 6: "καὶ μάλιστα τοὺς ψυχῆς πεπονθότας τὴν νέκρωσιν."

29 Gascou, *Sophrone de Jérusalem* (n. 12 above), 19, proposes that the miracles may be read as a "panorama des erreurs religieuses des temps." These include monophysite sects, pagans, those hostile to the cult of martyrs, and many others.

30 Booth, "Saints and Soteriology," 55.

which Sophronius assures his readers he saw himself or heard recounted by eyewitnesses. In particular, the selection and arrangement of miracles showcases Cyrus and John's geographic reach. Their beneficence radiates out "to the very ends of the earth," including Rome.<sup>31</sup>

As Sophronius explains in the preface, his miracle collection is structured according to the origins of the individuals cured by Cyrus and John. The first thirty-five miracles tell of Alexandrians, the subsequent fifteen miracles feature Egyptians and Libyans, while the last twenty miracles report on foreigners (ἐπὶ τοῖς ὀθνεῖσι), including pilgrims from Syria, Palestine, the Greek islands, Asia Minor, Constantinople, and one from Rome.<sup>32</sup> In his prelude to this third part, Sophronius entreats foreigners not to feel insulted on account of their placement at the end of his text. He acknowledges the difficulty they must have had traveling to the shrine and the piety that this entailed, offering as justification for his arrangement that he did not want their miracles to overshadow the rest by recounting them first.<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, Sophronius reminds his readers that the first will be last and the last will be first, thus establishing an inverse hierarchy of his text, humbly reinforced by the placement of his own cure as the final miracle of the collection.<sup>34</sup>

The protagonist of the penultimate miracle, a pilgrim from Rome named John, is the sole westerner included in Sophronius's collection. Like many of Sophronius's miracles, the story of the pilgrim John revolves around the inability of worldly doctors to accomplish a cure. John the Roman sought out medical help for his weak eyes. Though treatment by expensive physicians rendered him completely blind, he still sought their assistance. Finally, when he had spent the last of his money, the doctors, hitherto eager to treat him, informed him that his blindness was incurable.

John was forced to seek free medical care. Since he had heard rumors of Cyrus and John's miraculous abilities, the blind pilgrim traveled across the Mediterranean to their shrine outside of Alexandria. There, in an impressive act of ascetic renunciation, he vowed not to enter the saints' sanctuary until cured. Accordingly, he spent the next eight years braving the elements outside the door of their shrine. At long last the saints appeared to him and through their touch cured his blindness. Although it was the middle of the night, John the Roman awoke and, before finally entering the church, took a piece of red ocher that was near at hand and wrote, with pride, on the wall next to the door: "I, John, from the great city of Rome, although blind for eight years, waited and recovered my sight here through the power of Cyrus and John."<sup>35</sup> This graffito, Sophronius tells us, remained as a testimony to John's cure. Pilgrims frequently recorded their presence at the shrines they visited, as attested, for example, by the signatures of individuals that abound in the Roman catacombs, but their messages are more laconic, usually recording only an individual's name, title, an expression of humility, or perhaps a brief invocation for assistance.<sup>36</sup> John the Roman appears unusual in so extensively describing his origins and the circumstances surrounding his cure. Alternatively, we might attribute the loquaciousness of the graffito to Sophronius himself.

John's cure is remarkable on account of his multi-year wait and the many hardships he experienced in the process. For Sophronius, however, what makes the miracle impressive is John's Roman identity. In introducing John, he underscores the pilgrim's origins and the implications of his cure for Rome:

He was a Roman—not being from a city subject to the Romans [i.e., the Roman/Byzantine Empire]—but rather having as his fatherland and city Rome herself, who first ruled over them. For Rome truly wished to add this too to

31 Sophronius, *Encomium*, 33, ed. Bringel, 70, lines 13–14: "... καὶ εἰς αὐτὰ τῆς οἰκουμένης τὰ πέρατα, τὰ περὶ τούτων ἀφίκετο ῥήματα."

32 Sophronius, *Preface*, 6, ed. Bringel, 24–26, "καὶ μὲν τοι καὶ τῆς τετάρτης τὸ ἡμισυ, τῶν εἰς Ἀλεξανδρέας Κύρω καὶ Ἰωάννῃ πραχθέντων δηλοῦσιν τὴν δύναμιν· τὸ δὲ ταύτης λειπόμενον καὶ δεκάς ἡ πέμπτη, τῶν ἐπ' Αἰγυπτίοις δρασθέντων καὶ Λίβυσι, γεγόνασι κήρυκες· ἕκτη δὲ καὶ ἑβδόμη, τὰς ἐπὶ τοῖς ὀθνεῖσι αὐτῶν εὐεργεσίας μνηνοῦσιν."

33 Sophronius, *Miracles*, 51, ed. Fernández Marcos (n. 12 above), 361–62.

34 Sophronius, *Miracles*, 51.4, ed. Fernández Marcos, 364: "Καὶ πρῶτιστοι μὲν οἱ ἔσχατοι, ἔσχατοι δὲ πάλιν οἱ πρῶτιστοι γίνονται. . ."

35 Sophronius, *Miracles*, 69.8, ed. Fernández Marcos, 393: "Ἐγὼ Ἰωάννης, πόλεως τῆς μεγίστης Ῥώμης ὁρμώμενος, τυφλὸς ὀκτῶ χρόνους γενόμενος, ἐνθάδε διὰ τῆς τῶν ἁγίων Κύρου καὶ Ἰωάννου δυνάμεως προσκαρτερήσας ἀνέβλεψα."

36 C. Carletti, "Viatores ad martyres: Testimonianze scritte altomedievali nelle catacombe romane," in *Epigrafia medievale greca e latina: Ideologia e funzione; Atti del seminario di Erice (12–18 settembre 1991)*, ed. G. Cavallo and C. A. Mango (Spoleto, 1995), 197–225.

her own splendor, that she should be adorned by what she took to be more divine, the miracles of Cyrus and John, knowing these to be much more splendid than crowns or scepters or porphyry. For these things have their origin from the earth and so will again dissolve into the earth. But the gifts of grace brought down from above out of heaven and begotten by divine power do not admit of dissolution into the earth. Then let us not envy Rome's attempt, if she, having earthly glory, also grasps at heavenly glory.<sup>37</sup>

Rome is presented as an eager consumer of sanctity. Not content with her imperial past, the city now seeks to be foremost in heaven. To do so, she draws on the resources of eastern sanctity. By having one of her own cured by Cyrus and John, the city partakes in the heavenly glory of the saints, adding this to her former temporal glory.

The account of the pilgrim John is our earliest evidence for a desire to evince Roman interest in the cult of Cyrus and John. Its placement in Sophronius's miracle collection is an indication, from Sophronius's perspective, of Rome's status as a Mediterranean city within (but at the furthest extreme of) the saints' healing orbit. Cyrus and John's healing powers, Sophronius tells us, had spread to Rome by rumor (ἐκ φήμης), the subliterate pathways of information, conveyed by the traders and other travelers who disseminated so many saints' cults around the Mediterranean world.<sup>38</sup> At the

same time Sophronius singles out Rome as distinctive, a city historically unique and unsurpassed in its material splendor and of continued importance to Christianity.

### *Sophronius in Rome*

Sophronius's subsequent life and writings reflect a similarly positive attitude to Rome. Sophronius does not tell us whether the pilgrim John returned to Rome after he was cured by Cyrus and John. According to an anonymous prologue in John Moschus's *Spiritual Meadow*, however, Sophronius himself, subsequent to his own miraculous cure in Alexandria, visited Rome.<sup>39</sup> This prologue, a generally well-informed source, reports that John Moschus, while in Alexandria, heard of the fall of Jerusalem to the Persians (in 614) and "sailed off for the great city of the Romans with his truest disciple Sophronius."<sup>40</sup> In Rome John Moschus attracted a small but devoted following and completed his *Spiritual Meadow* but died soon after. On his deathbed he gave Sophronius his completed work and entreated him to bring his body to Mount Sinai or, should that prove impossible, to the monastery of St. Theodosius by Bethlehem. Soon afterward, Sophronius set out from Rome with John Moschus's body and twelve disciples (imitating the journey of Joseph and his brothers, the preface tells us) and arrived at the monastery of St. Theodosius.

Nothing specific is known about Sophronius's stay in Rome, but we may imagine that an eagerness to see the great city and its martyrs and respect for the bishop of Rome provided the impetus for his visit.<sup>41</sup>

37 Sophronius, *Miracles*, 69.2, ed. Fernández Marcos, 391–92: "Ρωμαῖος οὗτος ἐτύγχανεν, οὐ πόλεως ὑποφόρου Ῥωμαίοις ὀρμώμενος, ἀλλὰ Ῥώμην αὐτὴν τὴν πρώτην αὐτῶν βασιλεύσαν, πατρίδα καὶ πόλιν κτησάμενος· καὶ Ῥώμη γὰρ ἀληθῶς ἐπεθύμησε τῇ οἰκείᾳ καὶ τοῦτο προσθεῖναι λαμπρότητι, τὸ Κύρου καὶ Ἰωάννου τοῖς θαύμασιν ὡς θειοτέροις τισὶ ἐγκαλλωπίζεσθαι, πολὺ ταῦτα λαμπρότερα στεφάνων καὶ σκήπτρων καὶ πορφυρίδος γιγνώσκουσα. Ταῦτα μὲν γὰρ ἐκ γῆς τὴν γένεσιν ἔχοντα, πάλιν εἰς γῆν ἀναλύεται· τὰ δὲ τῶν μαρτύρων χαρίσματα ἀνῶθεν ἐξ οὐρανοῦ καταγόμενα, καὶ θεία δυνάμει τικτόμενα, ἀνάλυσιν τὴν εἰς γῆν οὐκ εἰσδέχεται· τῇ Ῥώμῃ γοῦν μὴ φθονήσωμεν τῆς ἐφέσεως, ἣ [ῆ in Mai's edition; *si* in Latin translation, equivalent to the homophonous word *ei*; my translation follows the reading suggested by the Latin] τῶν γῆνιν τὴν εὐκλειαν ἔχουσα, καὶ τῶν οὐρανίων τῆς δόξης ὀρέγεται." Sinopia ("σινοπιδιον") is a red earth pigment that was used as a paint and dye.

38 I borrow the use, in this context, of "subliterary" from C. Rapp, "Hagiography and Monastic Literature between Greek East and Latin West in Late Antiquity," in *Cristianità d'Occidente e Cristianità d'Oriente (secoli VI–XI)*, 24–30 aprile 2003, Settimane di studio del

Centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo 51 (Spoleto, 2004), 1221–82, esp. 1251–66.

39 For the Greek text see H. Usener, *Sonderbare Heilige* (Leipzig and Berlin, 1907), 91–93. A French translation is provided by Schönborn, *Sophrone de Jérusalem* (n. 17 above), 243–44, appendix 2. For discussion of Sophronius's stay in Rome, with reference to older scholarship see J.-M. Sansterre, *Les moines grecs et orientaux à Rome aux époques byzantine et carolingienne: Milieu du VI<sup>ème</sup> s. – fin du IX<sup>ème</sup> s.* (Brussels, 1983), 56–60. Sansterre discusses, and convincingly disproves, the theory that "Rome" here refers to New Rome, that is, Constantinople. See also Booth, *Crisis of Empire* (n. 15 above), 106–8.

40 *Prologue*, ed. Usener, 92: "... καταλιπὼν τὴν Ἀλεξάνδρειαν ἐπὶ τὴν τῶν Ῥωμαίων μεγάλην πόλιν ἀπέπλευσεν σὺν τῷ ἑαυτοῦ γνησιωτάτῳ μαθητῇ Σωφρόνιῳ."

41 C. von Schönborn, "La primauté romaine vue d'Orient pendant la querelle du monoenergisme et du monothélisme (VII<sup>e</sup> siècle)," *Istina* 20 (1975): 476–90.

Sophronius expressed his great esteem for the Roman church in his *Synodical Letter*, written subsequent to his stay in Rome upon becoming patriarch of Jerusalem in 634.<sup>42</sup> In the letter Sophronius describes Pope Leo (r. 440–461) as “the great and illustrious Leo of godly mind, of the most holy church of the Romans, or rather of the luminary of all under the sun.”<sup>43</sup> Rome, in the synodical letter as in the miracle collection of Cyrus and John, is portrayed as the acme of Christianity.



## 2. Sts. Cyrus and John in Seventh- to Eighth-Century Rome

In the decades after Sophronius visited Rome, his theological position (opposing Monotheletism and Monoenergism) turned him into a hero of the Roman church. Sophronius’s theological position was endorsed in Rome by the Lateran Council of 649 and vindicated on the imperial stage when his *Synodical Letter* was read aloud at the Sixth Ecumenical Council (680–81) in Constantinople. It is in this later context (roughly the late seventh or early eighth century) that we find the earliest evidence for the Roman reception of Sts. Cyrus and John. In Rome, excerpts of Sophronius’s hagiographic dossier of Cyrus and John were translated into Latin, and frescos of the saints were added to the church of S. Maria Antiqua on the *forum Romanum*.<sup>44</sup> By the mid-eighth century there is also evidence for relics of and ecclesiastical dedications to the saints in and around Rome.<sup>45</sup>

In Rome, Cyrus and John were promoted above all as healing saints—in accordance with the profile that Sophronius had crafted for them. Additionally, their Sophronian pedigree appears to have contributed

to their appeal. Like Sophronius, members of the Roman elite who participated in the cult of Cyrus and John took for granted that these Alexandrian saints would be efficacious for all of Christendom, including inhabitants of Rome. Yet the evidence also suggests subtle shifts in the saints’ Roman profile, indications of the city’s own strongly ecclesiastical and predominantly Latin traditions of Christian sanctity.

### *Translating the Miracles of Cyrus and John in Rome*

The seventh- or eighth-century Latin translation of Sophronius’s dossier does not survive and, on account of the complex later history of this text, only its outlines can be reconstructed, partially at best.<sup>46</sup> As discussed below (§3), in the late ninth century Anastasius Bibliothecarius expanded, and perhaps reworked, this preexisting partial translation; his version is the

46 The most recent Latin edition of these texts remains that of Mai: *Preface and Encomium* (BHL 2079), ed. Mai, *Spicilegium romanum* 3:1–95 (PG 87.3:3379–3422); *Miracles* (BHL 2080), ed. Mai, *Spicilegium romanum* 3:97–669 (PG 87.3:3423–3675). The most extensive Latin Sophronian corpus survives in Rome, Vat. lat. 5410 and Rome, Vallicelliana H 8.2, seventeenth-century manuscripts which claim to be copies of a manuscript dated 1204 that was at the time in S. Maria in Via Lata. For descriptions see A. Poncelet, *Catalogus codicum hagiographicorum latinorum: Bibliothecae Vaticanae* (Brussels, 1910), 130–31; and idem, *Catalogus codicum hagiographicorum latinorum bibliothecarum romanarum: Praeter quam vaticanae* (Bruxelles, 1909), 423 (as well as 249–50 for Rome, Bibliotheca Casanatensis 1046 [Alias XX II.11], an early 17th-century copy of Vat. lat. 5410). These two manuscripts contain different versions of the saints’ *passio* (Vallicelliana H 8.2 contains BHL 2078, Peter of Naples’s *Passio Cyri et Iohannis*, mutilated at the end; Rome, Vat. lat. 5410 contains the older version of the *passio* by Anastasius, BHL 2077, mutilated at the beginning); but the other contents of the manuscripts are the same. Both contain the three sermons attributed to Cyril of Alexandria (BHL 2077b–d), included in the Greek corpus of Sophronius’s texts; Sophronius’s *Preface and Encomium* (BHL 2079); Sophronius’s *Miracles* (BHL 2080); and the later *translatio Cyri et Iohannis* (BHL 2080e), discussed further below. (Not included in either manuscript, however, is the preface by Anastasius Bibliothecarius to his translation of the Sophronian corpus that mentions the earlier translation by Theodore and Boniface.) All of these Latin texts were edited by A. Mai. Together with their Greek counterparts they are printed in Mai, ed., *Spicilegium romanum* 3 and 4, and reprinted in the PG and PL. Specific editions will be cited below in discussions of individual texts. For an overview of the Latin texts see W. Berschin, “Bonifatius Consiliarius: Ein römischer Übersetzer in der byzantinischen Epoche des Papsttums,” in *Lateinische Kultur im VIII. Jahrhundert: Traube-Gedenkschrift*, ed. A. Lehner and W. Berschin (St. Ottilien, 1989): 25–40 at 36–37 (appendix 2).

42 For the text, English translation and detailed discussion of this letter see P. Allen, *Sophronius of Jerusalem and Seventh-Century Heresy: The Synodical Letter and Other Documents* (New York, 2009).

43 Sophronius, *Synodical Letter*, 2.5.3, ed. and trans. Allen, 132–33, “... τοῦ μεγάλου καὶ λαμπροῦ καὶ θεόφρονος Λέοντος τοῦ τῆς Ῥωμαίων ἁγιωτάτης ἐκκλησίας, μᾶλλον δὲ τῆς ὑπ’ ἡλίῳ πάσης φωστῆρος...”

44 See below; for the Latin translation, esp. n. 46; for the frescoes, nn. 75–76, 98.

45 See below; for the relic evidence, esp. nn. 94–95; for ecclesiastical dedications, nn. 87, 103–104.



only extant Latin translation. Indeed, the only evidence for the existence of the earlier Latin translation is Anastasius's brief comment in the preface to his translation:<sup>47</sup> "Of these miracles [i.e., Sophronius's collection] the *consiliarius* Boniface, at the request of the *primicerius defensorum ecclesiae Romanae* Theodore, once translated twelve chapters with the preface."<sup>48</sup>

On the basis of references to a *consiliarius* named Boniface in the late seventh century, scholars have tried to establish the precise date of this earlier translation, but the grounds for this identification are tenuous (see below). What Anastasius's brief statement does do, however, is firmly situate the translation in the milieu of Rome's ecclesiastical elite. This is a somewhat unexpected context for a text that, as Booth has demonstrated, not only emphasizes "ascetic virtue" as the means to salvation but also has an ambivalent attitude toward the "hierarchy and rituals of the Church."<sup>49</sup> In redacting and translating the text, then, Boniface, at Theodore's behest, was drawing on the writings of an influential and respected church father, and was also shifting the context of his writings—and exercising a certain level of ecclesiastical oversight over a cult that, as promoted by Sophronius, had endorsed a rather individualistic view of salvation.

Various forms of healing—from saintly intercession to doctors to older traditions of "magic"—were on offer in early medieval Rome.<sup>50</sup> Saints whose cults

(such as Sts. Cosmas and Damian) or whose legends (such as St. George) were associated with miraculous healing were to be found as the patrons of a variety of ecclesiastical institutions: churches, monasteries, *diaconiae*, and *xenodochia*. There is too little evidence to draw any conclusions about if and how miraculous healing took place at these sites, but in the absence of any direct papal (or other) oversight, we may imagine that a range of healing practices coexisted, some under clerical supervision, some not. Theodore and Boniface, in making Sophronius's text available to a Latin audience in Rome, affirmed the saints' channels (through dreams and waking visions) of divine intercession, but also intimated that these saints would be most effective operating under clerical supervision.

Anastasius's reference to Theodore and Boniface gives a sense of the ecclesiastical context which may have informed their interest in, and approach to, translating the text. As *primicerius defensorum*, Theodore was the head of the college of *defensores*, officials who assisted in church administration.<sup>51</sup> Although a *primicerius* typically would take no more than minor orders, he was highly influential within the church; during papal masses at station churches the

47 Anastasius's letter (commonly numbered 10) has been most recently edited by Berschin, "Bonifatius Consiliarius," 39–40 (appendix 3). This supersedes the edition by E. Perels and G. Laehr in MGH Ep 7 (Epistolae Karolini Aevi 5): 426–27, which was based only on the then-damaged, now-destroyed, late 9th-century codex Chartres, Bibliothèque municipale 63 (115 1/G). Berschin's edition also uses a complete version of the text found in Montpellier, Bibliothèque interuniversitaire, Faculté de Médecine H 360 (M), dating from ca. 1000. An English translation of the letter (based, however, on the MGH edition) is provided by B. Neil, "The Miracles of Saints Cyrus and John: The Greek Text and Its Transmission," *Journal of the Australian Early Medieval Association* 2 (2006): 183–93 (appendix).

48 Anastasius Bibliothecarius, *epist.* 10, ed. Berschin, 39: "Quorum videlicet miraculorum . ' bonifacius consiliarius . ad petitem theodori primicerii defensorum ecclesie romane . duodecim cum prefatione capitula olim interpretatus est .'" (For the punctuation used by Berschin's edition and reproduced here see p. 38.)

49 Booth, "Saints and Soteriology" (n. 19 above), 63; idem, *Crisis of Empire* (n. 15 above), 80–87.

50 The use of talismans against demons by members of Rome's eastern Christian communities is demonstrated by J. M. H. Smith,

"Cursing and Curing, or The Practice of Christianity in Eighth-Century Rome," in *Italy and Medieval Europe: Papers for Chris Wickham on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday*, ed. R. Balzaretti, J. Barrow, and P. Skinner, Past and Present Supplement (Oxford, forthcoming). I am grateful to Julia Smith for sharing this article with me prior to publication.

51 P. Llewellyn, *Rome in the Dark Ages* (New York, 1971), 114–16; S. O. Keller, *Die sieben römischen Pfalzrichter im byzantinischen Zeitalter* (Amsterdam, 1962), 112–13; T. S. Brown, *Gentlemen and Officers: Imperial Administration and Aristocratic Power in Byzantine Italy, A.D. 554–800* ([London], 1984), 185–86; B. Fischer, "Die Entwicklung des Instituts der Defensores in der Römischen Kirche," *Ephemerides Liturgicae* 48 (= n.s. 8) (1934): 443–54. A *primicerius defensorum* Theodore is not known from any other sources: L. Halphen, *Études sur l'administration de Rome au Moyen Âge (751–1252)*, Bibliothèque de l'école des hautes études, Sciences historiques et philologiques 166 (Paris, 1907), includes lists of all known *primicerii*. See also L. Santifaller, "Saggio di un elenco dei funzionari, impiegati e scrittori della Cancelleria Pontificia dall'inizio all'anno 1099," *Bulletino dell'Istituto storico per il Medio Evo e Archivio Muratoriano* 56 (1940): 1–865. There is evidence for a *Theodorus* who was *primicerius sanctae romanae ecclesiae*, that is, head of the notaries, in the early 9th century (*ibid.*, 42–43). However, given that the name Theodore was very common in the Byzantine Empire, it is unlikely that this is the same individual. There are 208 entries for "Theodorus" in *PLRE* 3 (covering A.D. 527–641), many of whom were in Italy.

*primicerius defensorum* and *primicerius notariorum* (the head of the college of notaries) accompanied the pope on his right and left as he received lay offerings.<sup>52</sup> His many tasks included administering papal patrimonies, negotiating church contracts, resolving disputes among churchmen, carrying out charitable bequests, and dispensing alms. Given the charitable connotations of Cyrus and John's cult, we might speculate that Theodore considered the saints a useful bulwark in the ecclesiastical administration's attempts to encourage virtuous behavior among the Roman elite. He might also have had an economic motive.<sup>53</sup>

Meanwhile, as *consiliarius*, Boniface could have been involved in a wide range of activities. Walter Berschin has argued on the basis of four other references to individuals named Boniface in late-seventh-century Rome (all of whom he equates to our Boniface), that we can precisely identify the Boniface responsible for Sophronius's translation.<sup>54</sup> However, given that three popes of the seventh century had the name Boniface and that we do not know how widespread the rank of *consiliarius* was, this interpretation seems overly optimistic.<sup>55</sup> Nevertheless, the references collected by Berschin provide a helpful overview of the range of responsibilities and activities which might engage a *consiliarius*.

The *Liber Pontificalis*'s biography of Pope Sergius I (r. 687–701) tells of a Boniface *consiliarius* in Rome whom the emperor had arrested and brought to Constantinople as a means of exerting pressure on the pope.<sup>56</sup> Meanwhile, according to the *vita* of St. Wilfrid

(d. 709), a certain Boniface, “an archdeacon, one of the wisest of the *consiliarii*,” is described as a friend and teacher of Wilfrid during his first visit to Rome in 654.<sup>57</sup> Another Boniface (with no specification as to his rank) is mentioned a second time in the same *vita*. This Boniface is an acquaintance of Wilfrid from the time of Pope Agatho (r. 678–681). According to the *vita*, Boniface testified, in Rome, on Wilfrid's behalf as Wilfrid petitioned to be restored to his see under Pope John VI (r. 701–5).<sup>58</sup> Furthermore, the Acts of the Seventh Ecumenical Council of 787 (Nicaea II) record how in the time of Pope Benedict II (r. 684–85), when Macarius, the patriarch of Antioch, was sent as an exile to Rome, a *consiliarius* named Boniface visited him daily, trying unsuccessfully to convert him from the Monothelete heresy.<sup>59</sup>

Unsurprisingly, given his title, the profile that emerges of a *consiliarius* is that of a learned individual. Late-seventh-century *consiliarii* met with both Constantinopolitan officials and visitors from more distant locations, such as the Anglo-Saxon Wilfrid or the Antiochene patriarch Macarius. Excellent knowledge of Greek was likely a must. *Consiliarii* were also well versed in ecclesiastical procedures; we are told that the *consiliarius* Boniface instructed Wilfrid in the four gospels and the art of calculating the date of Easter. The task of converting the patriarch Macarius also suggests a grasp of theology that accords well with the task of translating Sophronius. Furthermore, a *consiliarius*'s role in

52 *Ordo* 1.69; M. Andrieu, *Les ordines romani du Haut Moyen Âge*, 5 vols., Spicilegium sacrum Lovaniense, Études et documents 11, 23, 24, 28, 29 (Louvain, 1931–1961), 2:91. For discussion of this *ordo* see Romano, *Liturgy and Society* (n. 10 above).

53 In Menouthis, although Cyrus and John were famed for providing their services free of charge, the stewards of their shrine seem to have benefited financially from involvement with the cult. This is suggested, for example, by a miracle (no. 24) in which a wealthy woman, Juliana, arriving at the shrine at the same time as a poor woman, also named Juliana, receives the coveted location closer to the saints' relics; discussed in Montserrat, “Pilgrimage” (n. 16 above), 269–70.

54 Berschin, “Bonifatius Consiliarius.”

55 Boniface III (r. 607); Boniface IV (r. 608–615); Boniface V (r. 619–625).

56 *Liber pontificalis* 86.7, ed. Duchesne, 1:373: “Qui imperator Sergium magistranum in spretum praeonominati pontificis Romam mittens, Iohannem Deo amabilem Portuensem episcopum

seu Bonifatium consiliarium apostolicae sedis in regiam abstulit urbem.”

57 Berschin, “Bonifatius Consiliarius,” 27–28; *Vita S. Wilfridi*, 5, ed. W. Levison, MGH ScriptRerMerov 6, 193–263, here 198: “... nomine Bonifatium archidiaconem, unum ex consiliariis sapientissimum.” The *vita* dates to the early eighth century. Regarding Wilfrid's life and visits to Rome see A. Thacker, “Wilfrid, St. (d. 710),” in *The Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Anglo-Saxon England*, 2nd ed., ed. M. Lapidge et al. (West Sussex, 2014), 495–96.

58 *Vita S. Wilfridi*, 53, ed. Levison, 248: “Tunc Bonifatius et Siszentius et alii nonnulli, qui eum in diebus beatae memoriae Agathonis agnoscentes viderunt, dicebant, istum esse praesentem Deo amabilem Wilfridum episcopum, quem beatissimus Agatho purificatum de accusationibus...”

59 Cited in Berschin, “Bonifatius Consiliarius,” 28–29, n. 15: “... etenim Romae in exilio erat Macarius haereticus a sexta synodo missus; et quadraginta dies dedit ei spatium sanctae memoriae pater noster papa Benedictus et per singulos dies mittebat ad eum Bonifacium consiliarium suum et commonitoriis verbis docebat eum ex divina scriptura; et nunquam voluit corrigi.”

mediating between different cultural contexts could well have alerted him to the theological and spiritual benefits of introducing the cult of Cyrus and John to a Latin-speaking elite and rendered him well equipped to adapt Sophronius's text for such an audience.

### *Boniface's Latin Portrait of Cyrus and John*

Although Boniface's translation does not survive, Anastasius's description, that Boniface's translation consisted of "twelve chapters and the preface (*duodecim cum prefatione capitula*)," allows us to reconstruct its outlines. Boniface did not attempt to reproduce Sophronius's extensive Greek dossier in Latin, but rather provided an overview of the saints' cult that rendered it more suitable for the Roman elite. Emphasized in Boniface's translation project are the saints' Sophronian pedigree and their healing abilities, as well as, more subtly, the importance of liturgical rituals in effecting miracles.

The "preface" translated by Boniface seems (as Walter Berschin has argued based on careful textual analysis) to refer only to Sophronius's briefer preface (*προθεωρία*) and not the longer encomium (*ἐγκώμιον*) that follows.<sup>60</sup> Sophronius's *προθεωρία* provides a summary of his reasons for composing the text: the lack of an adequate account of the saints, the saints' miraculous cure of his eyes, and his vow to compose a work in their honor. Sophronius incorporates biblical citations to stress the importance of rendering God his due, no matter the difficulties, and describes how the saints came

to his assistance as he struggled to complete his work, encouraging and reprimanding him until he succeeded. Sophronius's preface also provides a brief overview of the contents of the work (namely that it will describe the saints' martyrdom, their translation by Cyril, and some of their miracles). Furthermore, he explains the rationale for the inclusion of seventy miracles and justifies the style he has adopted for the purpose. Although he admits that a relaxed and free style is best suited for saints' miracles, Sophronius affirms that he chose to use an intense (*σύντονον/extensum*) style to reflect the saints' eagerness (*τὸ σύντονον*) to cure the sick.<sup>61</sup>

To a certain extent, then, this preface may be read as an introduction to Cyrus and John. Yet as such, it is a rather unsatisfying text. Few details of any sort are given about the saints' lives, deaths, or posthumous cult. Instead, in accordance with Sophronius's emphasis on himself throughout the text, the prologue highlights the Sophronian pedigree of the saints' cults. At the same time, by *not* translating the *encomium*, Boniface omitted both Sophronius's more detailed Christological interpretation of the saints, as well as his detailed description of the saints' healing sanctuary in Menouthis, information which may have seemed unnecessarily complex or of lesser interest to a Roman audience.

Anastasius also tells us that in addition to translating the preface, Boniface translated twelve chapters (*duodecim capitula*), that is, twelve miracles. Sophronius's extensive miracle collection, a monument to the geographical scope of Cyrus and John's healing powers outward from Alexandria, was thereby shrunk into a short set of examples.

Strong circumstantial evidence (based on the inclusion of material from the first twelve miracles in a different saint's life, the *Acta S. Barbatiani*) suggests that Boniface's translation included the first twelve miracles (of Alexandrians) in Sophronius's

60 Berschin compares the passages of Sophronius's dossier included in Anastasius's translation of the Greek Acts of the Council of Constantinople held in 869–70 (also referred to as the 8th Ecumenical Council) to Anastasius's translation of Sophronius's dossier. He concludes that Anastasius's translation of a section of Sophronius's encomium in the conciliar acts is much closer to the Greek than is the translation of this same section found in Anastasius's full corpus; Berschin concludes that the translation in Anastasius's hagiographic dossier is unlikely to be by Boniface, since Boniface is unlikely to have been freer in his translation than Anastasius. Although the conciliar acts also contain an excerpt from one of the miracles (no. 36), in that case Berschin concludes that both translations are at times closer to the Greek, meaning that we cannot be sure whether this was a miracle already translated by Boniface: Berschin, "Bonifatius Consiliarius," 30–31. (As I shall discuss, however, there is other evidence to suggest that Boniface translated the first 12 miracles.) Berschin's conclusions do, of course, assume (1) that Anastasius retained Boniface's translation in the hagiographic dossier and that he did not retranslate the text or significantly edit Boniface's translation and (2) that Boniface would not have been freer than Anastasius in his translation style.

61 Sophronius, *Preface*, 6, ed. Bringel, 26, lines 7–10: "οὐκ ἀγνοοῦμεν δὲ ὡς ταῖς τῶν θαυμάτων ἱεραῖς διηγήσεσιν ὅτι ὁ ἀνειμένος μᾶλλον χαρακτήρ καὶ ἐκλυτός ἐπρεπεν· ἀλλ' ἡμεῖς τοῦτον ἑάσαντες, τὸν σύντονον παρελάβομεν, ἵνα καὶ δι' αὐτοῦ τὸ τῶν ἀγίων θερμόν καὶ εὐκίνητον καὶ πρὸς τὰς τῶν νοσούντων ἰάσεις σημαίνει τὸ σύντονον"; ed. Mai, *Spicilegium romanum* 3:17–18, "Non autem ignoramus quod sacris miraculorum narrationibus, mollis stilus magis congruat et solutus, sed nos hunc relinquentes, extensum suscepimus, ut per hunc concitum sanctorum fervorem, et ad curas aegrotantibus conferendas designent instantiam." Regarding this formal oratory, see Gascou, *Sophrone de Jérusalem*, 12; Duffy, "Observations," 71–76.



dossier.<sup>62</sup> Furthermore, if the dependence of the *Acta S. Barbatiani* on Boniface's translation is accepted, a comparison of these texts to each other indicates that Boniface translated at least half of these twelve miracles in their entirety (rather than abridging them).<sup>63</sup> In many ways these first twelve miracles are representative of the work as a whole. A diverse set of individuals is included: men, women, and children from different social strata. Particularly prominent, however, are members of the elite. Sophronius explains in the first miracle of the collection, "Therefore, let Ammonius begin the miracles for us, since he was among the leading men of the city, distinguished for his wealth and distinguished on account of his good father."<sup>64</sup> The second miracle describes the cure (speedily accomplished)

62 F. Lanzoni, "Gli 'Acta S. Barbatiani presbyteri et confessoris'," *Rivista di scienze storiche* 4 (1909): 635–58, 712–34 at 712–14 demonstrated that the Latin *Acta S. Barbatiani* borrowed from Sophronius's miracle collection of Cyrus and John (transforming the miracles to relate to St. Barbatianus). Given that the Latin of the two texts (Anastasius's translation of the *Miracles* and the *Acta S. Barbatiani*) is quite similar (although the *Acta S. Barbatiani* is significantly freer in its Latin), Lanzoni argued that the two texts cannot be independent translations from the Greek. The question then arises: which translation was using the other's text? Given that it would have been almost impossible for someone to reconstruct Cyrus and John's miracles based on the mutilated and rearranged text of the *Acta S. Barbatiani*, Lanzoni concludes that the anonymous author of the *Acta S. Barbatiani* must have been working with a preexisting Latin translation of the miracles of Cyrus and John. But since the *Acta S. Barbatiani* make use only of material from the first twelve chapters of Cyrus and John's miracles, Lanzoni reasonably concludes that the anonymous author of the *Acta S. Barbatiani* had available to him Boniface's translation (and not the longer translation by Anastasius). The *Acta S. Barbatiani* are edited by Lanzoni (638–57) side-by-side with Anastasius's translation (as edited by Mai). Lanzoni dates the *Acta S. Barbatiani* to 850–ca. 1000; it must have been composed prior to the 11th century (when it was used by Peter Damian), but later than the mid-9th century (based on its use of Agnellus's *Liber Pontificalis ecclesiae Ravennatis*). For discussion of the text see E. M. Schoolman, *Rediscovering Sainthood in Italy: Hagiography and the Late Antique Past in Medieval Ravenna* (New York, 2016). I am grateful to Edward Schoolman for drawing my attention to this text.

63 Miracles 2–7 are included, with only minor omissions (especially the geographical origins of the individuals) in the *Acta S. Barbatiani*. It is possible that Boniface's translation of Sophronius's preface (προθεωρία) might have been a précis (rather than a full translation).

64 Sophronius, *Miracles*, 1.2, ed. Fernández Marcos, 243: "Οὐκοῦν ἀρχέτω τῶν θαυμάτων ἡμῖν ὁ Ἀμμώνιος, ἐπεὶ καὶ αὐτὸς τῶν πρώτων ὑπῆρχε τῆς πόλεως, πλούτῳ τε διαπρέπων καὶ ἀγαθῷ πατρὶ σεμνυνόμενος"; ed. Mai, *Spicilegium romanum* 3:98, "Ammonius ergo miracula

of a certain Theodore, a coincidence that cannot have displeased the *primicerius defensorum ecclesiae Romanae* Theodore, who had commissioned the translation.<sup>65</sup>

The first twelve miracles, like the rest of Sophronius's miracles, portray the saints as assisting in the cure of a wide range of physical ailments. In general, the narratives begin with the inability of worldly doctors to find a cure, followed by the saints' intervention. Emphasized throughout is the essential role of an individual's faith in bringing about this cure. For example, Ammonius is first cured of an "inflammation of the soul [τῆς ψυχῆς τὴν φλεγμονήν]," before receiving a bodily cure.<sup>66</sup> On account of the "simplicity [ἀπλότης]" of his faith, Theodore is cured quickly, and a man named "Good [Καλὸς]," whose character matches his name, receives his cure on account of his "unwavering faith."<sup>67</sup> Noteworthy among the first twelve miracles, however, are also the occurrence of two themes that may have particularly appealed to Boniface and Theodore, namely the importance of liturgical ritual in effecting a cure and the universal applicability of the saints' healing powers.

Although Sophronius's miracles usually do not accord much space to ecclesiastical personnel or liturgical ritual in bringing about a cure, miracle 12,

nobis initiet, idcirco quod hic de proceribus extitit civitatis, opulentia praeclarus, et benigno patre gloriosus."

65 Sophronius, *Miracles*, 2, ed. Fernández Marcos, 247: "Περὶ Θεοδώρου τοῦ ἐσχηκότος ἐν τοῖς δύο ὀφθαλμοῖς τὰ λευκώματα"; ed. Mai, *Spicilegium romanum* 3:109, "De Theodoro qui albores in utrisque oculis habuit."

66 Sophronius, *Miracles*, 1.6, ed. Fernández Marcos, 244: "Ἐπεὶ γὰρ τὸν νεανίαν ἐώρων ὑπέροφρον, καὶ τῷ τοῦ πλούτου φυσήματι πρὸς ἀλαζονείαν αἰρόμενον, οὐ πρότερον τοῦ σωματικοῦ τένοντος τὰς οἰδήσεις κατέπαυσαν, εἰ μὴ τῆς ψυχῆς τὴν φλεγμονὴν ἐθεράπευσαν. πλείω γὰρ τῆς τῶν σωμάτων ἰάσεως τῆς τῶν ψυχῶν ἀπαθείας φροντίζουσιν"; ed. Mai, *Spicilegium romanum* 3:102, "Etenim videntes eundem adulescentem supercilio elevari, et opulentiae fastu ad elevationem extolli, non prius corporalis cervicis tumores sedaverunt, quam animae iactantiam curavissent. Plus enim salute corporis animarum integritatem desiderant."

67 Theodoros: Sophronius, *Miracles*, 2.3, ed. Fernández Marcos, 247: "Χρόνον γὰρ ἐν αὐτῷ διατρίψας βραχύτατον, καρπὸν ἐκομίσαστο τὸν οὐ χρόνοις πολλοῖς γεωργούμενον, ἀλλ' ἀπλότητι πίστεως τιθηνομένου"; ed. Mai, *Spicilegium romanum* 3:111, "Tempus enim ibidem moratus brevissimum, fructum adeptus est, qui nec temporibus multis acquiritur, sed simplicitate fidei coalescit." Kalos: 3.3, ed. Fernández Marcos, 248: "Ἦν ἀδιστάκτῳ τῇ πίστει πρεσβεύων κομίζεται. . ."; ed. Mai, *Spicilegium romanum* 3:113, "quam, cum fide indubia precaretur, adeptus est. . ."



concerning the heretic Julian, is a notable exception.<sup>68</sup> After engaging in long disputations with Julian, Cyrus and John finally succeed in convincing him that he should embrace communion with the church. But since Julian is reluctant to have his conversion made public, the saints deceptively advise him that he should attend mass only until the reading of the gospel, leave and then secretly re-enter the church later to take communion alone. Julian follows the saints' advice, but, as the saints had in fact intended, Julian is detected and his conversion is publicized. Thus, Boniface's translation, as suited its ecclesiastical context, concluded with an account which portrayed the saints as eagerly cooperating with the ecclesiastical hierarchy.

We may also identify a message more specifically relevant to a Roman audience in the inclusion of miracle 8, of a certain Christodoros, the steward of the saints' shrine.<sup>69</sup> This is an elaborate story that includes numerous miracles, but what is unusual for Sophronius here is that the first of the miracles takes place away from the saints' shrine. While traveling, Christodoros is caught in a terrible storm and prays to the saints, who indeed come to his rescue. Thereupon Sophronius takes the opportunity to emphasize the saints' universality: "For no place is an obstacle to their aid and evil-averting arrival, whether on land or on the marsh, or even on the sea, whether it be nearby or separated by a very large distance. But rather in whatever place someone calls upon them for aid, they attend to him quickly."<sup>70</sup> Boniface's Roman audience was thus assured that their distant location in Rome was no obstacle to the saints' healing powers.

Lastly, before we turn to the visual evidence for Cyrus and John's cult in Rome, it is worth noting that one of the miracles included in Boniface's Latin translation helpfully explained how to recognize Cyrus: "It was Cyrus who appeared seated; for he was a monk, and he is always obligated to appear in the habit [σχήματι] of monks. A cabinet stood in front of the martyr so that there the dress/equipment [σχῆμα] of physicians too might be kept."<sup>71</sup> As presented in Boniface's Latin dossier, then, Cyrus and John were saints readily recognizable and accessible in Rome, an available resource to Romans who, granted that they approached the saints with faith, could hope to be cured in body and in soul—a cheerful prospect of salvation.

### *Greek Speakers in S. Maria Antiqua*

Parallel to this textual evidence for the cult of Cyrus and John in Rome we also have visual evidence for the saints' veneration. This comes in the form of frescoes from the church of S. Maria Antiqua on the *forum Romanum*. In total there are four images of Cyrus and two images of John in the church, ranging in date from the early eighth to the mid-/late tenth century.<sup>72</sup> Given the uncertain dating of both the textual and the fresco evidence it is impossible to correlate them precisely—and we should not forget that much more evidence for their cult has likely disappeared. Nonetheless, in the proliferation of representations of Cyrus and John throughout the church of S. Maria Antiqua, we can continue to examine how the cult of Cyrus and John was repackaged for audiences in Rome. Again, what stands out in the visual evidence is Cyrus and John's appeal, first and foremost, as healing saints. Noticeable,

68 Sophronius, *Miracles*, 12, ed. Fernández Marcos, 264–269; ed. Mai, *Spicilegium romanum* 3:169–86. Booth, *Crisis of Empire*, 79, points out that "mention of the eucharist within the *Miracles of Cyrus and John* occurs only in those cases where the supplicant is a heretic or a pagan (*Miracles* 12, 31, 32, 36–39)."

69 Sophronius, *Miracles*, 8, ed. Fernández Marcos, 253–56; ed. Mai, *Spicilegium romanum* 3:127–41.

70 Sophronius, *Miracles*, 8.4, ed. Fernández Marcos, 254: "εἴργει γὰρ αὐτῶν τὴν ἄρωγὴν καὶ τὴν ἀνεξίκακον ἀφίξιν τόπος οὐδεὶς, οὐ χερσαῖος, οὐ λιμναῖος, οὐδὲ πάλιν θαλάττιος, οὐ πλησίον συγκείμενος, οὐ μακρὰν ἀφεστὼς διαστήμασιν, ἀλλ' εἰς ὅπου περ ἂν αὐτοὺς τις πρὸς συμμαχίαν καλέσειεν εὐθέως ἐφίστανται. . ."; ed. Mai, *Spicilegium romanum* 3:131, "nullus quippe locus adventum eorum et salutare praesidium prohibet, non terra, non stagnum, neque mare, non in propinquo positus locus, non longe distentus spatii, sed ubicumque eos quisquam ad auxilium invocaverit, confestim adsistunt. . ."

71 Sophronius, *Miracles*, 10.6, ed. Fernández Marcos, 261: "Κῦρος ἦν οὗτος ὁ φανείς καθεζόμενος· μοναστῆς γὰρ ἐγένετο, καὶ μοναστῶν αἰεὶ ὀφείλεται φαίνεσθαι σχήματι. Πυργίσκος δὲ ἔμπροσθεν ἐστήκει τοῦ μάρτυρος, ἵνα τὸ τῶν ἰατρῶν, φησὶν, σχῆμα κάκει διασώζοιτο. . ."; ed. Mai, *Spicilegium romanum* 3:156, "Cyrus autem hic erat qui videbatur consedere. Monachus namque fuerat, et monachorum apparet in habitu. Armarium vero coram martyre positum stabat, ut etiam in hoc medicorum figuram ostenderet."

72 The so-called Chapel of the Physicians, which dates to around the time of Pope John VII (r. 705–7), includes representations of both Cyrus and John on the north wall; there is a second image of Cyrus in a niche on the south wall. The east wall of the atrium includes a niche with Cyrus that dates from around the time of Pope Paul I (r. 757–67). The same wall also contains a fresco of Christ flanked by Cyrus and John, which likely dates to the second half of the tenth century. These are all discussed in depth below.

however, is also an implicit (and imprecise) characterization of the saints as “eastern” healing saints, as well as a preference for the more heavenly Cyrus.

The church of S. Maria Antiqua has a complex history that remains a subject of much debate.<sup>73</sup> It is not certain who was responsible for the church in its earliest phases. Suffice it to say here that the *Liber Pontificalis* reports the church’s redecoration under Pope John VII (r. 705–7).<sup>74</sup> Given that the decorative program attributed to him involved Greek inscriptions in the apse, we may also conclude that at this time Greek-speaking clergy affiliated with the papacy were involved in determining the iconographic program of the church. Based on stylistic and paleographical considerations, scholars have also tended to date the earliest frescoes of Cyrus and John to around the time of Pope John VII. These frescoes, however, are situated not in the nave of the church but in the Chapel of the Physicians, a small room to the right of the apse (A on fig. 1).<sup>75</sup>

73 The scholarship on this church is extensive; fundamental are G. M. Rushforth, “The Church of S. Maria Antiqua,” *BSR* 1 (1902): 1–119; W. de Grüneisen, et al., *Sainte Marie Antique* (Rome, 1911); E. Tea, *La Basilica di Santa Maria Antiqua* (Milan, 1937); and P. Romanelli and P. J. Nordhagen, *S. Maria Antiqua* (Rome, 1964). More recently see J. Osborne et al., eds., *Santa Maria Antiqua al Foro Romano: Cento anni dopo; Atti del Colloquio internazionale, Roma, 5–6 maggio 2000* (Rome, 2005) and the forthcoming proceedings of the Dec. 4–6, 2013, conference at the British School in Rome, “Santa Maria Antiqua: ‘The Sistine Chapel of the 8th Century’ in Context. A Consideration of the Site from the 4th–9th century.” Regarding the frescoes see also B. Brenk, “Kultgeschichte versus Stilgeschichte: Von der ‘raison d’être’ des Bildes im 7. Jahrhundert in Rom,” in *Uomo e spazio nell’alto Medioevo* (Spoleto, 2003): 971–1054 at 993–1032. The painted images by J. Wilpert, *Die römischen Mosaiken und Malereien der kirchlichen Bauten vom IV. bis XIII. Jahrhundert* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1917) document the state of the frescoes not long after they were discovered.

74 *Liber pontificalis* 88.2, ed. Duchesne, 1:385, lines 6–8.

75 For a description of the chapel, see Rushforth, “Church,” 76–81; Tea, *Basilica*, 337–43; P. J. Nordhagen, *The Frescoes of John VII, A.D. 705–707, in S. Maria Antiqua in Rome* (Rome, 1968), 55–66. The chapel is connected to the presbytery by a door in the east wall and also accessible from the north (leading to the church’s west aisle). According to Krautheimer/Frankl/Corbett’s interpretation, however, the unblocking of the door to the north could also postdate the fresco cycle: Krautheimer et al., “S. Maria Antiqua,” *Corpus Basilicarum Christianarum Romae* (n. 8 above), 2.3:249–270, here 262. I am grateful to Eileen Rubery of the Courtauld Institute of Art, London University, for sharing with me her unpublished paper “What Can the Alexandrian Cult of the Medical S. Cyrus, Centred in the Church of S Maria Antiqua in the Roman Forum, Tell Us about the Cults of Medical Saints and the Care of the Sick in

The Chapel of the Physicians is so named, by modern scholars, for the numerous healing saints, including Cyrus and John, who adorn its walls. As David Knipp has argued, this unusual space likely served as a site of incubation, imitating, in Rome, the healing practices found in eastern Mediterranean healing sanctuaries, like that for Cyrus and John in Egypt.<sup>76</sup> Rather than attempt to create an exact replica of such a sanctuary, however, the Chapel of the Physicians drew on a range of eastern saints, offering its audience a collective vision of “eastern” saintly healing.

We do not know who was specifically responsible for the Chapel of the Physicians, but we may imagine a situation analogous to the later, mid-eighth-century Theodotus Chapel, whose frescoes were commissioned by Theodotus, a Roman notable who served in both the Byzantine and the papal administration in Rome (B on fig. 1).<sup>77</sup> The Greek inscriptions, the choice of saints, and eastern Mediterranean precedents for the Chapel of the Physicians bespeak individuals who were steeped in the cultural heritage of the Byzantine Mediterranean, but who were also amenable to adjusting these traditions to the city of Rome.

Two of the chapel’s walls preserve frescoes depicting saints standing in a row (six on each wall), their names once carefully written beside them in Greek (figs. 2–3).<sup>78</sup> Some of the frescoes are too eroded to allow

Byzantine Rome?,” presented at the Patristics Conference in Oxford in 2011; these ideas were also presented in a paper entitled “S. Maria Antiqua, the Cult of Cyrus and John in Rome and Sophronius of Jerusalem,” presented at “Santa Maria Antiqua,” British School in Rome, December 2013 (see above).

76 D. Knipp, “The Chapel of Physicians at Santa Maria Antiqua,” *DOP* 56 (2002): 1–23.

77 H. Belting, “Eine Privatkapelle im frühmittelalterlichen Rom,” *DOP* 41 (1987): 55–69; A. Rettner, “Dreimal Theodotus? Stifterbild und Grabstiftung in der Theodotus-Kapelle von Santa Maria Antiqua in Rom,” in *Für irdischen Ruhm und himmlischen Lohn: Stifter und Auftraggeber in der mittelalterlichen Kunst*, ed. H.-R. Meier et al. (Berlin, 1995): 31–46; N. Teteriatnikov, “For Whom Is Theodotus Praying? An Interpretation of the Program of the Private Chapel in S. Maria Antiqua,” *CahArch* 41 (1993): 37–46; L. Jessop, “Pictorial Cycles of Non-Biblical Saints: The Seventh- and Eighth-Century Mural Cycles in Rome and Contexts for Their Use,” *BSR* 67 (1999): 233–79 at 236–55.

78 The saints are located on the west and north walls of the chapel (that is, on the walls facing to the right and behind when entering the chapel from the side aisle). Nordhagen hypothesized that the east wall may have contained a frieze of female saints: Nordhagen, *The Frescoes of John VII*, 63.

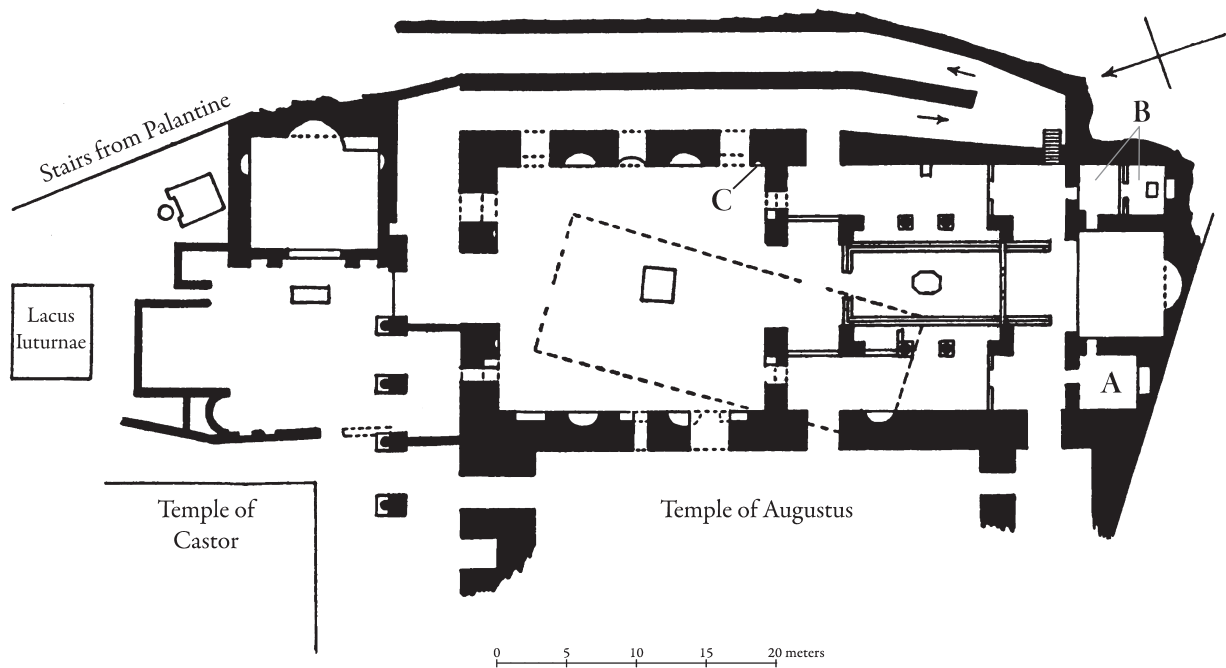


Fig. 1. Plan of S. Maria Antiqua, Rome. A = Chapel of the Physicians; B = Theodotus Chapel; C = site of frescoes of St. Cyrus and Christ flanked by Sts. Cyrus and John (after G. McN. Rushforth, "The Church of S. Maria Antiqua," *BSR* 1 [1902]: 18)

secure attributions, but the saints who can be identified are St. Dometius, St. Pantaleon (Panteleemon) of Nicomedia, St. John (presumably St. Cyrus's companion), St. Celsus, St. Cyrus, and Sts. Cosmas and Damian.<sup>79</sup> As many scholars have noted, almost all of these are Byzantine physician saints, that is, saints originating from the eastern Mediterranean and renowned for their healing powers.<sup>80</sup> Some of the saints even hold surgeon's boxes, reinforcing the message of their curative abilities.

In addition to these wall frescoes, the room also contains a frescoed niche, very near the ground, depicting St. Cosmas, St. Cyrus, St. Stephen, St. Procopius, and St. Damian (fig. 4). Based on the curative powers of

some of these saints, but in particular on account of the unusual location of this "icon," near the ground, David Knipp has argued that this chapel functioned as a site of incubation.<sup>81</sup> As in the shrine of Cyrus and John in Menouthis, the sick could have spent the night on the floor, entreating and lighting candles to the saints, who would then have appeared to prescribe a cure for them. Although no other late antique incubation shrines are known from Rome, or even Italy, there were also Constantinopolitan precedents for such a space, most famously the Kosmidion (Κοσμίδιον), where Sts. Cosmas and Damian attended to the sick.<sup>82</sup>

Yet, I argue, it is significant that in marked contrast with the Kosmidion, dedicated to Cosmas and Damian, or to the Egyptian sanctuary for Cyrus and

79 This is the order of the saints proceeding from the left end of the west wall to the right end of the north wall.

80 Most problematic for this interpretation remains Celsus, although it is not clear which St. Celsus is depicted. Rushforth, "Church," 78, suggests that this is not Celsus of Milan, the companion of St. Nazarius (who was well known in Italy), but rather Celsus of Antioch, the companion of Julian. Neither of these saints seems to have been particularly well known for healing abilities.

81 Knipp, "Chapel of Physicians," esp. 11–13. Throughout S. Maria Antiqua, frescoes located in recessed niches seem to have been the focus of particular veneration: Belting, "Eine Privatkapelle," 58.

82 C. Mango, "On the Cult of Saints Cosmas and Damian at Constantinople," in *Θυμία στη Μνήμη της Λασκαρίνας Μπούρα* (Athens, 1994), 189–92.



Fig. 2.  
S. Maria Antiqua,  
Chapel of the  
Physicians, fresco on  
west wall (by  
permission of the  
Ministero dei beni e  
delle attività  
culturali e  
del turismo—  
Soprintendenza  
Speciale per il  
Colosseo, il Museo  
Nazionale Romano  
e l'Area archeologica  
di Roma)



Fig. 3.  
S. Maria Antiqua,  
Chapel of the  
Physicians, fresco on  
north wall (by  
permission of the  
Ministero dei beni e  
delle attività  
culturali e  
del turismo—  
Soprintendenza  
Speciale per il  
Colosseo, il Museo  
Nazionale Romano  
e l'Area archeologica  
di Roma)







Fig. 4. S. Maria Antiqua, Chapel of the Physicians, fresco on south wall (by permission of the Ministero dei beni e delle attività culturali e del turismo—Soprintendenza Speciale per il Colosseo, il Museo Nazionale Romano e l'Area archeologica di Roma)



John, the Chapel of the Physicians directs its viewers' attention not to one saint or a pair of saints, but rather to a whole assembled panoply of sanctity, including saints not particularly known for their healing abilities (such as St. Stephen and St. Procopius). It is unclear which saint a patient is to call upon. Or rather, in more positive terms, the space emphasizes the collective nature of Christian sanctity in performing miracles, rather than (as emphasized in Sophronius's hagiographic dossier) the specific agency of individual saints. Standing together in a row, the saints, all of uniform height, surround the viewer with their presence. Although distinguished by their dress and, as those familiar with the saints would have known, originating from a range of locations throughout the eastern Mediterranean (Cappadocia, Nicomedia, Cilicia, Egypt, Syria, and Palestine), the saints appear together to assist the supplicant.

Such an interpretation does not, of course, explain the significance of the specific saints assembled. The small size of the chapel and its location, immediately adjacent to the presbytery, suggest that it was an intimate space, commissioned and intended for a select Greek-speaking audience (again in contrast to the Constantinopolitan Kosmidion, whose miracles record that it was frequented by crowds of residents and pilgrims). A range of irretrievable considerations, then, were likely involved in the specific choice of saints, from the personal devotion of those who commissioned the chapel, to the ideological connotations of certain saints.<sup>83</sup> The Sophronian pedigree of Cyrus and John may have helped motivate their inclusion.<sup>84</sup> Yet whether or not a unified program guided the choice of the saints, by assembling them together the chapel affiliated them with each other, presenting them as a group of related saints, in some sense similar to each other and, especially as indicated by their Greek inscriptions, different from other saints found in Rome.

Conspicuous also in the Chapel of the Physicians is the repeated inclusion of St. Cyrus, once on the upper walls together with St. John, and once without him in

the frescoed niche. This icon, as suited the chapel's placement within a church, gives pride of place, the center, to an ecclesiastical saint, the protomartyr Stephen, a deacon. To Stephen's left is Procopius; to the other side of Stephen is the monk Cyrus.<sup>85</sup> Here (as in the depiction of him on the north wall of the chapel and elsewhere in Rome) he is called **ΑΒΒΑΚΥΡΟΣ**, "Father Cyrus," emphasizing his spiritual vocation and eastern profile.<sup>86</sup> This portrayal of the monk Cyrus without his soldier-saint companion, St. John, contrasts sharply to Sophronius's emphasis on the pair as indivisible, suggesting a partiality for the more "heavenly" of the two saints.

### *Theodore, Theodotus, and Other Notables in S. Maria Antiqua*

From the mid-eighth century onward there is increasing evidence for the cult of Cyrus (and John) in Rome, most often in association with charitable institutions. The *Liber Pontificalis* reports, during the reign of Pope Zacharias (r. 741–52), the construction of an oratory dedicated to St. Abbacyrus, right outside Rome on the via Tiburtina.<sup>87</sup> As described by the *Liber Pontificalis*, the oratory was built on a piece of land donated by a certain Theodore, the "older son of Megistus Cataxanthus." The estate (which had a preexisting oratory for St. Cecilia) was enlarged and transformed by Pope Zacharias into a *domusculita*, a new type of rural estate run by the papacy that was often used to

85 Regarding Procopius see J. Sauget, "Procopio di Cesarea di Palestina," *Bibliotheca Sanctorum* (Rome, 1961–70) 10:1159–1166; H. Delehaye, *Les légendes grecques des saints militaires* (Paris, 1909), 77–89.

86 The term *abba* (Aramaic for father) was used in Greek as: "1. title of respect accorded to monks in gen., esp. to prominent ascetics and monks, and abbots of monasteries. . . 2. the *abbot*, as official designation. . . 3. title of respect given to priests and bishops as spiritual fathers" (*A Patristic Lexicon*, ed. G. W. H. Lampe [Oxford, 1961]); the term recurs throughout John Moschus's *Spiritual Meadow*.

87 *Liber pontificalis* 93.25, ed. Duchesne, 1:434: "Huius temporibus defunctus Theodorus maior filius Megisti cata Xanthi, ob veniam suorum delictorum, praedium quod ex hereditate fruebatur paterna, situm quinto ab hac Romana urbe miliario, via Tiburtina, in quo et oratorium sanctae Ceciliæ esse dinoscitur, beato Petro dereliquit. Quod ipse beatissimus papa magne constructionis fabricis atque picturis decoravit; ampliavitque in eo fines ex omni parte . . . praedia et domum cultam beato Petro eundem locum iure perpetua statuit permanendum: quae et domus culta sanctae Caeciliae usque in hodiernum diem vocatur. Construxit quippe in ea et oratorium sancti abba Cyri ubi et multas sanctorum condidit reliquias."

83 Brenk, "Kultgeschichte versus Stilgeschichte," 1018, has argued that many of the icons throughout S. Maria Antiqua would have been based on specific icons brought by eastern immigrants to Rome.

84 Rubery, "What Can," suggests Cyrus and John would have stood out as orthodox, anti-monothelite saints and would even have reminded educated viewers of Sophronius, the champion of orthodoxy.

underpin papal charity.<sup>88</sup> The *Liber Pontificalis* does not explain what motivated the dedication to Cyrus, but we might surmise that Cyrus was among the saints favored by the Greek-speaking Roman elite to which the donor Theodore (to judge from his father's name) likely belonged, and that, in light of the *domusculta's* charitable purpose, a dedication to a physician-saint was regarded as suitable.<sup>89</sup>

Another member of Rome's eighth-century elite, Theodotus (whose chapel in S. Maria Antiqua was mentioned above), was also familiar with the cult of Cyrus and John. In addition to commissioning the family chapel in S. Maria Antiqua, Theodotus, who served both as *dux*, the foremost Byzantine administrator in Rome, and *primicerius sanctae sedis apostolicae*, a close advisor to the pope, was also responsible for the foundation of a diaconia, S. Angelo in Pescheria, in 755.<sup>90</sup> Among the sixty-three names of saints with whose relics the diaconia was dedicated, both Cyrus—"s(an)c(t)i Abbaquiri"—and John are included, as well as the group of female martyrs Athanasia, Theoctiste, and Eudoxia, who (according to Sophronius's account) were martyred along with Cyrus and John.<sup>91</sup>

Moreover, Theodotus's dedicatory inscription includes all the saints depicted with Cyrus and John in the Chapel of the Physicians.<sup>92</sup> Theodotus was certainly familiar with the Chapel of the Physicians, given its close proximity to the chapel he commissioned. Accordingly, his choice of saints may be interpreted as a

self-conscious desire to patronize this repertoire of eastern healing saints who had demonstrated their efficacy at the diaconia of S. Maria Antiqua. Yet Theodotus's inscription also exhibits a shift indicative of the changing audience for these saints in Rome: their names are given in Latin, not Greek.

Theodotus's dedicatory inscription in S. Angelo in Pescheria is the earliest surviving evidence attesting to the circulation of the saints' relics in Rome. There is, however, tantalizing evidence suggesting that relics of St. Cyrus were available in Rome at an even earlier date.<sup>93</sup> Two authentications, from the monastic relic collections of Saint-Maurice d'Agaune and Chelles, indicate relics of St. Cyrus. The former, written in a hand dating to the second half of the seventh century, is labeled "relics of St. Abbacyrus [+Reliquias de s(an)c(t)o abacyro]";<sup>94</sup> the latter, whose script is dated to the second half of the eighth century, reads: "from the garment of the martyr, St. Abbacyrus [De vestimento s(an)c(t)i / abba Churu marteri]".<sup>95</sup> We may imagine that like so many other transalpine relics, these relics were acquired, by gift, purchase, or theft, in Rome.<sup>96</sup>

In Menouthis, proximity to the saints' relics was a step in soliciting the saints' attention. The relic authentications indicate that, at least for some Latin audiences—in Rome and north of the Alps—relics remained a desideratum. The authentications also attest to the same preference for "St. Abbacyrus" that I have suggested is apparent in Rome. Furthermore, it is intriguing that the Chelles authentication refers to the clothing of St. Cyrus since, as we have seen above, one of the miracles probably included

88 Regarding the *domuscultae* and their connection with papal charity see especially S. Scholz, "Das Papsttum, Roms wirtschaftliche Lage und die Enteignung der päpstlichen Patrimonien in der Mitte des 8. Jahrhunderts," in *Päpstliche Herrschaft im Mittelalter: Funktionsweisen—Strategien—Darstellungsformen*, ed. S. Weinfurter (Düsseldorf, 2012), 11–25.

89 Although onomastics are rarely a secure indicator of an individual's identity or native language, the name of Theodore's father, Megistus Cataxanthus, does suggest a family that had ties to a Greek-speaking milieu.

90 For a transcription of the dedicatory inscription see F. De Rubeis, "Epigrafi a Roma dall'età classica all'alto medioevo," in *Roma dall'Antichità al Medioevo: Archeologia e storia*, ed. M. S. Arena et al. (Milan, 2001), 104–21 at 118–19, no. 10.

91 Theodotus's inscription, line 25.

92 Theodotus's inscription, line 11: "s(an)c(t)i Stephani"; line 12: "s(an)c(t)i Celsi"; line 18: "s(an)c(t)i Abbaquiri, s(an)c(t)i Iohanni, s(an)c(t)i Dometii"; line 19: "s(an)c(t)i Procopii, s(an)c(t)i Pantaleoni"; line 20: "s(an)c(t)i Cosmae, s(an)c(t)i Damiani". Rushforth, "Church" (n. 73 above), 80.

93 I am grateful to Julia Smith for drawing my attention to this evidence and supplying me with the relevant editions and citations.

94 J. M. H. Smith, "Catalogue des étiquettes," in *Abbaye de Saint-Maurice d'Agaune, 515–2015, 2: Le trésor*, ed. P. A. Mariaux (Gollion, 2015), 232–57 at 233, no. 5.

95 *Chartae latinae antiquiores: Facsimile-edition of the Latin Charters Prior to the Ninth Century*, ed. A. Bruckner and R. Marichal, 18: France, 6 (Olten/Dietikon-Zürich, 1985), p. 88, no. 669, item xxvi. Digital version available at [https://www.siv.archives-nationales.culture.gouv.fr/siv/UD/Fran\\_IR\\_052903/c-a9bdmy299-16y6ndbwoslx](https://www.siv.archives-nationales.culture.gouv.fr/siv/UD/Fran_IR_052903/c-a9bdmy299-16y6ndbwoslx) (accessed 26 May 2017).

96 J. M. H. Smith, "Old Saints, New Cults: Roman Relics in Carolingian Francia," in *Early Medieval Rome and the Christian West: Essays in Honour of Donald A. Bullough*, ed. J. M. H. Smith, The Medieval Mediterranean 28 (Leiden, 2000), 317–39, esp. appendix, 335–39.



Fig. 5.

Fresco of St. Abbacyrus, S. Maria Antiqua, east wall of atrium (by permission of the Ministero dei beni e delle attività culturali e del turismo—Soprintendenza Speciale per il Colosseo, il Museo Nazionale Romano e l'Area archeologica di Roma)



in Boniface's Latin translation notes Cyrus's monastic garb as part of his characteristic appearance.<sup>97</sup>

Meanwhile, at about the same time as Theodotus founded his diaconia, a new image of St. Cyrus (without John), was added to S. Maria Antiqua in a niche on the far end of the east wall of the atrium (fig. 5; C on

fig. 1).<sup>98</sup> As with the frescoed niche in the Chapel of the Physicians, the recessed placement of this fresco

98 J. Osborne, "The Atrium of S. Maria Antiqua, Rome: A History in Art," *BSR* 55 (1987): 186–223 at 199 and plate XVIII, fig. 1d; Knipp, "Chapel of Physicians" (n. 76 above), 17–19; Rushforth, "Church," 96–97; Tea, *Basilica* (n. 73 above), 257–58. It has been suggested that this fresco dates to the pontificate of Pope Paul I (757–67), who also arguably added a large fresco of eastern and western saints to the left aisle of the church.

97 See above, n. 71.



suggests that it was intended for particular veneration. Underneath the image a small cavity in the niche may once have held relics of the saint.<sup>99</sup> In the fresco, Cyrus, with a long beard and a wrinkled brow, is holding a box of medical instruments and a scalpel; the saint is labeled, on either side, in Greek, “St. Abbacyrus (O AΓΙOC ABBAKYPOS).”<sup>100</sup> His age and medical instruments emphasize his wisdom and skill, presenting Cyrus as a trustworthy doctor and spiritual father.

The new image of Cyrus was labeled, as in the Chapel of the Physicians, in Greek, but by its new placement, Cyrus became available to a wider audience. The atrium was the primary means of entry to S. Maria Antiqua from the *forum Romanum* and was decorated with various frescoed niches.<sup>101</sup> Given that by the mid eighth-century S. Maria Antiqua was serving as a diaconia, we may wonder whether the image was added for the benefit of the church’s welfare recipients.<sup>102</sup> Together with other saints, Cyrus greeted visitors, offering them the hope of bodily and spiritual salvation.

Further dedications in Rome likewise continue to point to Cyrus’s close association with charitable endeavors. By 807, at the latest, the diaconia of S. Angelo in Pescheria had an altar dedicated to “sancti abba Cyri.”<sup>103</sup> In Leo III’s catalogue of 807, an oratory dedicated to Cyrus in the “*xenodochium* called a *Valeris*” is attested.<sup>104</sup> Yet again, conspicuous in both dedications, as well as in the mid-8th-century fresco in S. Maria Antiqua, is their preference for Cyrus. The monk is favored over his military companion, the more divine over the more earthly.

99 Alternatively, Tea, *Basilica*, 112, suggested that the cavity could have held medical tools, as such objects were found in the excavations.

100 Rushforth, “Church,” 98: the words are inscribed perpendicular to the image.

101 Osborne, “Atrium,” 191.

102 The inscription in the so-called Theodotus Chapel, which names Theodotus as the *dispensator* of the church, indicates that it had already assumed that function by 752, when this chapel was completed; the *Liber Pontificalis*’s life of Pope Leo III (r. 795–816) explicitly calls S. Maria Antiqua a *diaconia*.

103 *Liber pontificalis* 98.108, ed. Duchesne, 2:32.

104 *Liber pontificalis* 98.81, ed. Duchesne, 2:25, “fecit autem et in oratorio sancti abba Cyri qui ponitur in xenodochium qui appellatur a Valeris canistrum ex argento pens. lib. II semis”; R. Santangeli Valenzani, “Pellegrini, senatori e papi: Gli *xenodochia* a Roma tra il V e il IX secolo,” *Rivista dell’Istituto nazionale di archeologia e storia dell’arte* 19–20 (1996–1997): 203–26 at 207–10.

### 3. Sts. Cyrus and John in Medieval Rome

In the previous section we have seen inhabitants of Rome in the late seventh and eighth centuries interpreting the cult of Cyrus and John as their own. Cyrus and John were regarded as eastern saints in the sense that their cult was based in the Greek-speaking eastern Mediterranean, but there is no indication of a perceived need to justify the presence of these Greek saints—or their relics—in Rome. In the late ninth century a more self-conscious program of appropriating Cyrus and John for the Latin West becomes apparent with Anastasius Bibliothecarius’s comprehensive translation program of Cyrus and John’s hagiographic dossier. The cultural distance implied in his project culminated in the development of a translation legend, according to which Rome had rescued, by theft, the relics of Cyrus and John from Alexandria.

#### *Anastasius Bibliothecarius, a Roman Aristocrat between Two Empires*

In the late ninth century Anastasius Bibliothecarius (d. ca. 877), a dexterous interlocutor between Byzantium and the Carolingian world, undertook a massive translation project that provided Latin-speaking audiences with both the complexity of Sophronius’s original project in Latin, and a neatly simplified Latin *passio* of the saints. His project put Cyrus and John, who had previously lacked a Latin *passio*, on firm ground in the Latin-speaking West. It also made further recourse to Greek texts about Cyrus and John unnecessary for Latin-speaking audiences, thus uncoupling the eastern and western traditions.

Without a doubt Anastasius Bibliothecarius was one of ninth-century Rome’s most ambitious and versatile figures. Born to an aristocratic family, Anastasius had a varied career, including a brief spell as pope in 855 before Benedict III (r. 855–858) gained control.<sup>105</sup> Thereafter Anastasius nonetheless managed to become abbot of Sta. Maria in Trastevere, secretary to Pope Nicholas I (r. 858–867), and *bibliothecarius* for

105 G. Arnaldi, “Anastasio Bibliotecario,” in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, ed. A. M. Ghisalberti (Rome, 1960–), 3:25–37; B. Neil, *Seventh-Century Popes and Martyrs: The Political Hagiography of Anastasius Bibliothecarius*, *Studia antiqua australiensia* 2 (Turnhout, 2006), 11–34.

Hadrian II (r. 867–872) and John VIII (r. 872–882), posts which allowed him to exercise control over papal correspondence and the papal library. Anastasius put to good use his knowledge of Greek, positioning himself as a cultural broker between the Byzantine and Carolingian Empires.<sup>106</sup>

Throughout his life Anastasius undertook an extensive array of translation projects for a range of patrons, including Roman popes, bishops from throughout Italy, and the Frankish king and emperor Charles the Bald (d. 877).<sup>107</sup> Anastasius's translations included hagiographic texts (often of individuals who had faced political opposition in Constantinople or had some connection to Rome), as well as conciliar acts, homilies, and historiographic texts. While each of these works must be situated in its particular context, in general we may identify a trend in Anastasius's work to delineate and strategically deploy Rome's "Greek" heritage for the benefit of Latin-speaking audiences in Rome and north of the Alps.

This motive is especially apparent in Anastasius's decision, toward the end of his life, to translate the hagiographic dossier of Cyrus and John.<sup>108</sup> As Anastasius describes in the preface (dated 875), he undertook the task at the request of an unnamed priest whose church

(location unknown) was dedicated to Cyrus and John.<sup>109</sup> This priest had already translated one version of Cyrus and John's *passio* but wished to supplement it with the translation of the version attributed to Sophronius.<sup>110</sup> Anastasius carried out the priest's request and did much more. He translated all the texts relevant to Cyrus and John and assembled them in a hagiographic dossier. This included the preface, the encomium, and all seventy miracles, as well as a later Greek *passio* attributed to Sophronius and the Greek sermons regarding the saints attributed to Cyril, patriarch of Alexandria.<sup>111</sup>

The Sophronian pedigree of the saints was clearly important to Anastasius.<sup>112</sup> In the preface, he stresses the importance of the patriarch of Jerusalem, whose "celebrated mention is found in many collected writings of our predecessors, [but] also in the sixth holy and universal council, especially since he published

106 I appropriate Clifford Geertz's term "cultural broker" from Helmut Reimitz, who uses it to describe certain figures throughout the early Middle Ages who operated comfortably between different cultural contexts: Reimitz, "Cultural Brokers of a Common Past: History, Identity and Ethnicity in the Merovingian Kingdoms," in Pohl and Heydemann, *Strategies of Identification*, 257–301.

107 For an introduction to Anastasius's translation projects see W. Berschin, *Greek Letters and the Latin Middle Ages: From Jerome to Nicholas of Cusa* (Washington, DC, 1988), 162–69; C. Leonardi, "Anastasio Bibliotecario e le traduzioni dal greco nella Roma altomedievale," in *The Sacred Nectar of the Greeks: The Study of Greek in the West in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. M. W. Herren and S. A. Brown, King's College London Medieval Studies 2 (London, 1988), 277–96; and in particular R. Forrai, "The Interpreter of the Popes: The Translation Project of Anastasius Bibliothecarius" (Ph.D. diss., Central European University, 2008). For a list of works translated by Anastasius see C. Leonardi, "L'agiografia romana nel secolo IX," in *Hagiographie, cultures et sociétés* (n. 19 above), 471–90 at 474–75. For the dedicatees of Anastasius's works, see especially R. Forrai, "The Readership of Early Medieval Greek–Latin Translations," in *Scrivere e leggere nell'alto medioevo: Spoleto, 28 aprile–4 maggio 2011* (Spoleto, 2012), 293–315.

108 Regarding Anastasius's translation of the miracles of John and Cyrus see Neil, *Seventh-Century Popes and Martyrs*, 52–55.

109 Anastasius, *Preface*, edited in Berschin, "Bonifatius Consiliarius," 39–40, here 39, lines 3–5, 11–15, "... pusillitatem meam cogere volueris · passionem sanctorum kyri atque iohannis · ex greco in romanum vertendi sermonem ... presertim cum ecclesia in qua divinis penes urbem cultibus et obsequiis incumbis · horum victoriosissimorum martirum memoria immo miraculis fulgeat · et eorum annue celebritatis · en dies festus immineat." The usual interpretation, following Sinthern, "Der römische Abbacyrus," has been to understand this church as S. Passera. However, there is no firm evidence for this assumption. Multiple dedications to Cyrus existed in Rome, and, as I discuss below, the evidence for S. Passera's dedication to Cyrus and John is complicated.

110 Anastasius, *Preface*, ed. Berschin, 39: "Sane passionis horum · duas editiones repperisse me memini · Quarum alteram olim cum interpretatus fuisset · quia quis huius conscriptor fuerit non est inventus · ad alteram id est ad istam interpretandam · me progre/di religiositas tua voluit · et hortata est · Huius autem scriptor · sanctus sophronius. ..." As Berschin discusses (40), it is unclear which other *passio* had previously been translated. There survive other Greek versions of Cyrus and John's *passio*, but the only other known Latin version is that by the subdeacon Peter of Naples in the tenth century: *BHL* 2078, ed. Mai, *Spicilegium romanum* 4:268–80.

111 Berschin, "Bonifatius Consiliarius," 36–37 (appendix II).

112 Anastasius had previously translated excerpts from Sophronius's dossier on Cyrus and John contained in the acts of the Council of Constantinople (8th Ecumenical Council): Anastasius Bibliothecarius, *Interpretatio Synodi VII* (PL 129:195–512, here 300); included were a brief excerpt from Sophronius's encomium (on the different ways in which saints are praised) and from the miracle collection, regarding a miraculous image of Christ, the Virgin Mary, and John the Baptist. Anastasius had also encountered the saints in his translation of Leontius of Neapolis's *Life of John the Almsgiver*, where the author reports that he heard of John (the Almsgiver) after coming from Alexandria, where he had visited the shrine of Cyrus and John: Neil, *Seventh-Century Popes and Martyrs*, 54.

several small works for the instruction of many, and clearly preached the teachings of the orthodox faith.”<sup>113</sup> A hagiographic dossier by such an illustrious author belonged to Rome’s heritage and thus deserved to be available in Latin.<sup>114</sup>

Anastasius’s extensive undertaking made available in Latin a wealth of material, at times contradictory, regarding Cyrus and John’s cult. By translating the saints’ passio ascribed to Sophronius, however, Anastasius also presented a synopsis of the saint that was slightly different from and much simpler than Sophronius’s complex portrait of them.<sup>115</sup> In part, the alterations (such as the passio’s more extensive elaboration of the saints’ tortures) correspond to the genre of *passiones*. Yet the passio also shifts the identity of the saints, rendering Cyrus much more explicitly a physician. Cyrus is described as an Alexandrian citizen, initially a layman, who, after he was forced to flee, took on the monastic habit. The passio says of Cyrus that “with his habitation he also changed his habit [*cum habitatione etiam habitum commutavit*].”<sup>116</sup> Already during his lifetime Cyrus

was a doctor (*medicus*), attending to both the spiritual and the physical well-being of his patients.<sup>117</sup> His workshop, so the passio affirms, was converted into a church for the three young men of the Old Testament saved by God from the fiery furnace (Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego). Meanwhile, John is presented as an Edessan “who was acknowledged as a faithful citizen of heaven, although he exercised a military dignity.”<sup>118</sup> The soldier John is thereby presented on an equal footing with the monk Cyrus in a passio whose portrayal of the saints corresponds, much more literally, to the saints’ posthumous profile as miracle workers.

In addition to emphasizing Cyrus’s profile as a physician, the passio also draws increased attention to Cyrus and John as eastern saints. For the most part the passio summarizes and rearranges Sophronius’s information about the saints’ martyrdom. But after their martyrdom, a tangential miracle story about the emperor Theodosius, not found in Sophronius’s text, is included.<sup>119</sup> Theodosius, so the passio narrates, was faced with the invasion of barbarian peoples into the western Empire. In his piety the emperor asks Theophilus, bishop of Alexandria, to consult a holy man in Egypt, Senuphius. Wearing a cloak (*pallium*) and holding a staff, Senuphius turns to the east and entreats God, then sends these accoutrements to the emperor. Theodosius, wearing Senuphius’s cloak and holding his rod, confronts the barbarian army, whereupon the barbarians immediately turn to flight. The passio justifies the inclusion of this curious story, which, in terms of its content, has very little to do with the saints, by explaining that it was this very bishop Theophilus who constructed the church in Canope to which the relics of Cyrus and John would eventually be translated.<sup>120</sup> The effect of this incident, however, is to construct a portrait of Egypt as a source of miraculous power in the east that helped sustain the Empire. This

113 Trans. in Neil, “Miracles of Saints Cyrus and John,” appendix; ed. Berschin, 39: “Huius autem scriptor · sanctus sophronius · qui post ierosolimitanus claruit presul · extitit · Cuius celebris memoria · in multis maiorum conscriptionibus sed et in sancta sexta et universali sinodo reperitur · Presertim cum nonnulla ad instructionem multorum opuscula ediderit · et sana orthodoxe fidei dogmata predicaverit .”

114 Similarly, in translating the sermons attributed to the patriarch Cyril of Alexandria, Anastasius contributed to creating a more complete Latin corpus of patristic literature: *BHL* 2077b–d; ed. Mai, *Spicilegium romanum* 4:263–66 (PL 129:712–14).

115 *BHL* 2077: ed. Mai, *Spicilegium romanum* 4:253–63 (PL 129:705–12) + *AB* 8 (1889): 95–96; *BHG* 469 (PG 87:33677–3689). The earliest manuscripts of this passio are the late-ninth-century Chartres, Bibliothèque municipale 63 (115 1/G) and the tenth-century Montpellier, Bibliothèque interuniversitaire, Faculté de Médecine H 360 (M). There are lacunae, due to damage, in the beginning of the text as it is edited by Mai from the Chartres manuscript.

116 *Passio* 6, ed. Mai, *Spicilegium romanum* 4:255: “Sanctus ergo cum esset medicus, quem paulo ante praediximus, saeculari quidem habitu, sed non animo, medicinas peragebat; non enim corporibus tantum laborantibus medebatur, sed et animabus, dignas has ex indignis educens; et fideles ex alienis a fide instituens, non ex his quae Galeni, et Hippocratis, et his similibus conscriptorum, infirmos in visitationibus consolans, sed et prophetis et apostolicis ac evangelicis admonitionibus, ad eam quae vere incolumitas et vita est, pertrahens et Christi ovili connumerans, atque regni caelorum heredes ostendens”; *Passio* 7, ed. Mai, *Spicilegium romanum* 4:255–56: Cyrus flees to Arabia (*ad Arabiam, quae est Aegypti maritima*) and lives in a fortress.

117 *Passio*, *AB* 8 (1889): 96, lines 10–12, 15–18: “Kyrus itaque memorabilis et admirabilis martyr, magnae quidem urbis erat Alexandriae civis . . . arte medicus, cujus ergasterium usque nunc omnibus evidens extat templum constructum sanctorum trium puerorum per eorum gratiam martyrum sanitates effundens.”

118 *Passio* 8, ed. Mai, *Spicilegium romanum* 4:256, “. . . haec beatissimus Iohannes cognoscens, qui edessenus quidem genere secundum carnem, sed caeli civis ut fidelis agnoscebatur, cum militari polleret dignitate.”

119 *Passio* 12–14, ed. Mai, *Spicilegium romanum* 4:259–61.

120 *Passio* 15, ed. Mai, *Spicilegium romanum* 4:261–62.

introduces an emphasis on Cyrus and John's "foreign" origins hitherto essentially absent in their Roman cult.

*Medieval Afterlife: Acquiring Cyrus and John for Rome*

Subsequent to Anastasius Bibliothecarius's translation project all evidence for the cult of Cyrus and John in Rome is in Latin. Cyrus and John's eastern origins are not forgotten—indeed, quite the contrary—but are framed in resolutely Latin, Roman, terms.

In the mid-ninth century the church of S. Maria Antiqua (likely damaged by an earthquake) was replaced by S. Maria Nova.<sup>121</sup> However, S. Maria Antiqua's atrium remained in use and perhaps even served as a church dedicated to St. Anthony.<sup>122</sup> The atrium was painted and repainted with frescoes throughout subsequent centuries.<sup>123</sup> Among those added, sometime in the mid-/late tenth or eleventh century, was a fresco of Christ, flanked by Cyrus and John (fig. 6; C on fig. 1).<sup>124</sup>

This fresco attests to the continued veneration of St. Cyrus in the space, albeit with significant changes. The placement of the fresco, immediately above the earlier frescoed niche of St. Cyrus, suggests that the older icon of Abbacyrus continued to be venerated; perhaps the later fresco was commissioned as an expression of gratitude for a successful cure accomplished by this early icon.<sup>125</sup> In contrast to the older fresco, however, the new fresco is inscribed in Latin, not in Greek, and

although, as in the earlier S. Maria Antiqua frescoes, Cyrus is represented with a long white beard, he is now accompanied by a young, beardless St. John wearing a costly cloak.

This same iconography, Christ flanked by Cyrus and John, is found in a ca. eleventh-century fresco from the apse of the small church of S. Passera, located outside the city walls, along the *via Portuense* (figs. 7, 8).<sup>126</sup> This unusual church, built into a preexisting Roman mausoleum, was probably first dedicated as a church in the mid-ninth century, and ninth-century frescoes depict prominent eastern church fathers.<sup>127</sup> Its dedication to Cyrus and John, however, is first attested by the eleventh-century fresco and eleventh-century documents. On account of the uncertain etymology of its name, its initial dedication is unclear.<sup>128</sup> Nonetheless, at least by the thirteenth century, S. Passera had become the hub for the cult of Cyrus and John in Rome.<sup>129</sup>

the saint, but does not include the donor's name (ibid.): "[ABBAC] VRVS ET IOHS / [PING]ERE ROG[A]VIT."

126 S. Manacorda, "La chiesa di Santa Passera a Roma e la sua decorazione pittorica medievale," *BA* 88 (1994): 35–58; regarding the frescoes see also M. Andaloro, *La pittura medievale a Roma*, 312–1431: *Atlante; Percorsi visivi*, 1: *Suburbio, Vaticano, Rione Monti* (Milano, 2006), 130–34. Simona Manacorda has demonstrated that the fresco is a thirteenth-century restoration of an earlier, likely eleventh-century fresco: Manacorda, "La chiesa," 47–48. The building also contained, in the lower church, fourteenth-century frescoes of Cyrus and John (on the sides of the niche).

127 Manacorda, "La chiesa," 38–39; Andaloro, *La pittura medievale*, 130–34.

128 In 1059, a vineyard "vocabulum sancti Abbacyri," outside the Porta Portuensis, is mentioned in a property donation from the archives of S. Maria in Via Lata (to which the church eventually belonged): Sinthern, "Der römische Abbacyrus," 225, n. 1. The church is not attested in any itineraries, papal biographies, or other written sources from the eighth/ninth centuries. A church dedicated to the saints, described as "non longe a flumine Tiberis," is mentioned in the life of Gregory the Great, composed in the late ninth century, but there is no reason to identify this as S. Passera: Manacorda, "La chiesa," 54, n. 2. Although earlier scholarship suggested that the name of S. Passera was a corruption of Abbacyrus, Manacorda, "La chiesa," 37, adduces documentary evidence to show that the name of the church derived from the name of the region. See also L. Cavazzi, *La diaconia di S. Maria in Via Lata e il monastero di S. Ciriaco: Memorie storiche* (Rome, 1908), 278–307.

129 In addition to S. Passera, twelfth-century Rome also housed the church of S. Abbacyri de militiis on the Quirinal: Hülsen, *Le chiese di Roma*, A1. There may also have been a church dedicated to the saints in Trastevere: Hülsen, *Le chiese di Roma*, A2.

121 The *Liber Pontificalis* reports the construction of a new "S. Maria Antiqua" by Pope Leo IV (*Liber pontificalis* 107.37, ed. Duchesne, 2:158); since a severe earthquake is recorded as occurring during the pontificate of Leo IV (*Liber pontificalis* 105.12, ed. Duchesne, 2:108), Rushforth suggested that this was the cause of the abandonment of the church's interior: Rushforth, "Church" (n. 73 above), 9.

122 Osborne, "Atrium," 220.

123 Ibid., 200–206. On the western wall, perhaps from the eleventh century, a fresco of another Alexandrian saint was added: St. Mary the Egyptian, a reformed prostitute who became an ascetic in the desert. The figure next to her is disputed, but Osborne convincingly argues that it is Zosimus, who visited Mary in the desert: ibid., 215–16.

124 Osborne suggests that the mural "may be plausibly assigned to the middle or second half of the tenth century"; ibid., 205–9, fig. 1:f and plates XXII, XXIIIa/b. Previous scholarship dated the fresco to anywhere from the tenth to the twelfth century. See also Rushforth, "Church," 98–99; Tea, *Basilica* (n. 73 above), 258.

125 Although it was previously thought that by the tenth century the ground level had risen to cover the earlier fresco of Abbacyrus, John Osborne has demonstrated that this was not the case: Osborne, "Atrium," 219. A fragmentary dedicatory inscription survives below





Fig. 6.  
Fresco of Sts. Cyrus  
and John on either  
side of Christ,  
S. Maria Antiqua,  
east wall of atrium  
(by permission of  
the Ministero dei  
beni e delle attività  
culturali e del  
turismo—  
Soprintendenza  
Speciale per il  
Colosseo, il Museo  
Nazionale Romano  
e l'Area archeologica  
di Roma)

A thirteenth-century inscription above the doorway of S. Passera proudly proclaims, “Here are preserved the bodies of Sts. Cyrus and John, which great Alexandria once gave to Rome” (fig. 9).<sup>130</sup> This is a reference to a translation narrative, first attested in the thirteenth century, of how the saints had been rescued

from Muslim Alexandria and brought to Christian Rome.<sup>131</sup> The fragmentation of the Mediterranean and

130 “+ Corpora s(an)c(t)a Ciri renite(n)t hic atq(ue) Ioh(ann)is / que quonda(m) Rome dedit Alexandria magna.”

131 The earliest known manuscript containing the translatio (BHL 2080e) was the now-lost 1204 manuscript from Sta. Maria in Via Lata, discussed above (n. 46), recopied in Rome, Vat. lat. 5410 and Rome, Vallicelliana H 8.2. The translatio was printed in Aringhus, *Roma subterranea* (Rome, 1651), 1:367–69; (Paris, 1659), 1:221–22 and edited by G. Prevete, *Raccolta di atti, di scritti e di memorie storiche intorno ai martiri alessandrini San Ciro medico e San Giovanni*



Fig. 7.  
S. Passera, Rome  
(photo by author)



the ideological divide between Islam and Christianity had given rise to a medieval legend that shamelessly repositioned Rome as the Alexandrian saints' legitimate home. Cyrus and John had become eastern saints who needed to be rescued by Rome.

*soldato* (Naples, 1916), 124–8. For discussion, see Sinthern, “Der römische Abbacyrus,” 225–30. A fresco (dated to the late twelfth century) from the lower level of S. Passera depicting a group of five people has been interpreted as depicting this translation, although there is not sufficient evidence to be certain: Manacorda, “La chiesa,” 40–41, plate I and fig. 12.

As we have seen above, relics of Cyrus likely reached Rome as early as the seventh century. From a seventh-/eighth-century Roman perspective the circulation of these relics through Rome was not particularly astonishing. From a twelfth-/thirteenth-century perspective, however, the presence of these Alexandrian relics in Rome was more remarkable, affording a greater opportunity for imaginative elaboration. The composer(s) of the *translatio* made use of this liberty to construct a narrative that would reframe Rome's past to showcase the city's claims to have always been the guardians of the Christian *oikoumene*.





Fig. 8. Fresco of Sts. Cyrus and John with Christ, S. Passera, apse, eleventh century (photo by author)



Fig. 9. Inscription, S. Passera (photo by author)

Similar to many other medieval translation narratives, the *translatio* of Sts. Cyrus and John frames the narrative as a pious theft approved by the saints.<sup>132</sup> Unlike the more famous translation of St. Mark to Venice, which likewise appropriated an Alexandrian saint through theft, the *translatio* of Sts. Cyrus and John places these events in a more distant, hazier, late antique past.<sup>133</sup> The *translatio* of St. Mark (in circulation by the tenth century) situates the theft of Mark from Venice in the reign of the Byzantine emperor Leo V (r. 813–20) and the doge Justinianus (d. 829).<sup>134</sup> In contrast, according to the *translatio* of Sts. Cyrus and John, which teems with anachronisms, Rome had acquired the Alexandrian saints centuries earlier.<sup>135</sup>

The *translatio* reports how, in the time of the emperors Honorius (r. 395–423) and Arcadius (r. 395–408) and Pope Innocent (r. 401–417), Alexandria was overrun by “Saracens.”<sup>136</sup> (Alexandria fell to the Arabs in 642.) The saints Cyrus and John appeared in a vision to two monks in Alexandria, Grimald and Arnulph, commanding them to steal their bodies and bring them to Rome.<sup>137</sup> At first the monks hesitated, but after the saints repeatedly entreated them, they took the saints’ bodies and sailed, first to Constantinople, where the relics performed many miracles, and then on to Rome.

132 P. J. Geary, *Furta sacra: Thefts of Relics in the Central Middle Ages* (Princeton, 1978).

133 *Translatio S. Marci*, ed. N. McCleary, “Note storiche ed archeologiche sul testo della ‘Translatio Sancti Marci,’” *Memorie storiche foregiuliesi: Giornale della Deputazione di storia patria per il Friuli* 27–29 (1931–33), 223–64; Geary, *Furta sacra*, 88–94.

134 *Translatio S. Marci*, ed. McCleary, 246.

135 Meanwhile the shrine for Cyrus and John in Alexandria seems to have remained in use until at least the ninth century (centuries after Alexandria had come under Arab rule): Montserrat, “Pilgrimage,” 259.

136 *Translatio*, ed. Prevete, 124 (Vallicell. H.8.2, f. 173r): “Temporibus Honorii, et Arcadii, qui religiosissimi imperatores fuerunt, Sancto Innocentio Papa existente, beatissimorum martyrum corpora Abba cyri et Joannis a catholicis duobus monachis, scilicet Grimaldo et Arnulpho translata sunt, videlicet ab Alexandria civitate usque ad urbem Romam. Erat autem illo tempore inter Saracenos, et civitatis Alexandriae incolae dissensio maxima usque adeo quod ipsi barbari cum perfidia magna super Alexandriam civitatem equitaverint.”

137 *Translatio*, ed. Prevete, 124 (Vallicell. H.8.2, f. 173r–v): “Fuit igitur omnipotentis Dei voluntas, ut praefatis monachis, Grimaldo utpote et Arnulpho visio quaedam apparuit. Enim vero suprascripti martyres, illis in nocte apparentes, talia eis verba intulerunt: Tollite quippe corpora nostra hinc et deferte ad Urbem Romam, illic ubi divina Dei clementia vobis insinuaverit, ibidem nos collacate.”

In Rome a pious widowed noblewoman in Trastevere named Theodora offered them hospitality until finally the relics were ceremoniously translated by Pope Innocent and the monks to the church of “S. Praxedis” on the via Portuensis (another name for S. Passera).<sup>138</sup> The saints’ relics (except for the head of St. Cyrus) were then hidden in the church, so thoroughly that “it is impossible for them to be moved by anyone by any means until the end of the world.”<sup>139</sup> Meanwhile the head of St. Cyrus was placed on the altar, where it cured the sick. Thus Rome, rescuing these saints from the Saracen threat, had acquired the distinguished physicians, Cyrus and John.

In one fell swoop the thirteenth-century *translatio* neatly simplified the early medieval Roman reception of the cult of Cyrus and John. With its succession of disparate individuals who participate in the translation (the monks Grimald and Arnulph, the pious noblewoman Theodora, and Pope Innocent), the imaginative narrative does, in a certain way, circuitously remember the complexity of the saints’ reception in Rome. Yet by repositioning the origins of the Roman cult for Cyrus and John back in the early fifth century, the legend compresses centuries of Roman engagement with the cult, proffering instead an image of a confident late antique Christian city, a Rome sure of itself and its place in the world, eagerly coming to the rescue of endangered saints in Egypt.



In tracing the cult of Sts. Cyrus and John in Rome through the centuries, we have observed how the saints were progressively adapted and naturalized to suit their Roman surroundings. Rome was not Alexandria. Beginning in the late seventh/eighth century,

138 There is evidence for the medieval cult of St. Praxedes at the church. Whether it predated the cult for Cyrus and John or arose later out of an association of “Passera” with “Praxedes” is unclear: Sinthern, “Der römische Abbacyrus,” 237–38.

139 *Translatio*, ed. Prevete, 127 (Vallicell. H.8.2, f. 175v): “Ibi enim cum omni reverentia corpora sanctorum quodam in conclavi secretissime a Papa et monachis, excepto capite sancti Abba Cyri recondita, et taliter consolidata sunt, quod impossibile est ab aliquo ea usque ad finem mundi nullatenus dimoveri posse.” Excavations were undertaken in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries but failed to find any relics: Cavazzi, *La diaconia di S. Maria in Via Lata*, 289–94.



ecclesiastical officials took charge of the saints' cult, the heavenly St. Cyrus was privileged over his more earthly companion, new images and mobile relics offered Romans access to the saints, and Menouthis lost prominence as the locus of the saints' healing power. From the ninth century onward, "St. Abbacyrus" became more explicitly a physician, but incubation no longer was the preferred method of soliciting his assistance.

More subtle, but more significant, was the shifting perception of what translating Sts. Cyrus and John to Rome entailed. The Mediterranean world of the Roman Empire was never a culturally homogenous unit. Nevertheless, as Peter Brown so evocatively described it in the *World of Late Antiquity*, "the Roman empire, that had sprawled so dangerously far from the Mediterranean by 200, was held together by the illusion that it was still a very small world."<sup>140</sup> By the time of Sophronius in the early seventh century this world had started to unravel and yet, at least in the case of the cult of Cyrus and John, a Mediterranean elite clung tenaciously to

the illusion. Saints from Alexandria, so Roman elites could claim, would be equally at home and efficacious in Rome. This conviction, as we have seen, rested not only on the shared twin legacies of the Roman Empire and Christianity, but also on a continued sense of belonging to the same world, a united Christendom.

In the ensuing centuries the geographic trajectory of the saints remained the same. In the thirteenth century Cyrus and John were still Alexandrian saints who had come to Rome. What changed was how that same geographic trajectory was perceived. What had once been regarded as movement within a world had become movement between worlds. The horizons of the Roman elite had changed. As Alexandrians, "Greeks," and "easterners" Cyrus and John had become foreigners in Rome.

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140 P. Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity: AD 150–750* (London, 1971), 14.

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